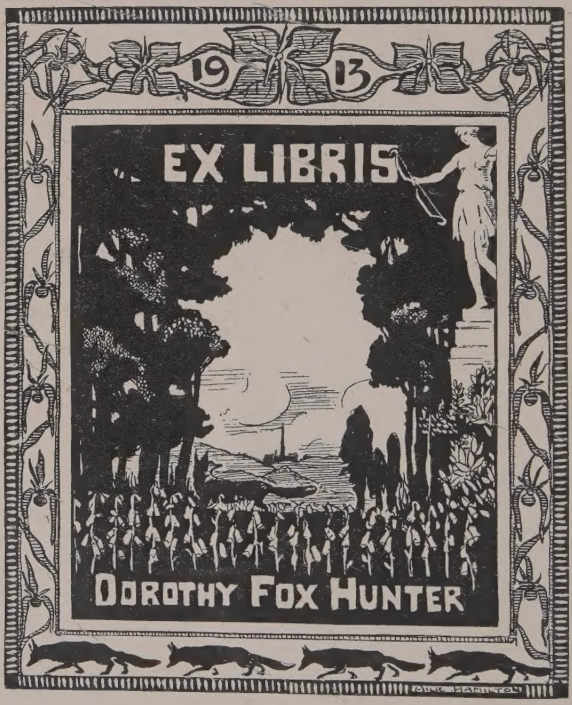
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THE HAWORTH EDITION

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË AND HER SISTERS

To D.F.H.

with much love

from

Olive B. Schreiner

July. 1909.

G.Richmond. R.A. del.

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Mrs Gaskell
1851.

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THE LIFE AND WORKS

OF

CHARLOTTE BRONTË

AND HER SISTERS

WITH

INTRODUCTIONS TO THE WORKS BY MRS HUMPHRY WARD

AND

AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES TO THE LIFE
BY CLEMENT K. SHORTER

IN SEVEN VOLUMES

WITH PORTRAITS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

VOLUME VII.

THE LIFE OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË

By Mrs Gaskell

LONDON
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE
1909

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THE LIFE

OF

CHARLOTTE BRONTË

BY

MRS GASKELL

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

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CLEMENT K. SHORTER

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1909

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INTRODUCTION

By universal acclamation the biographies of Johnson by Boswell and of Scott by Lockhart are accepted as the foremost achievements in English literary biography. Between these books and all other literary biographies in our language there is a great gulf fixed. Johnson's biographer had a subject peculiarly imposing. The king of later eighteenth-century literature, the oracle of his age, the friend of Burke and of Goldsmith must of necessity have made a fascinating topic for succeeding times. In his biographer also he was fortunate. A literary expert, a friend of years, of boundless zeal and enthusiasm, and well-nigh limitless indiscretion, Boswell alone in his era had the qualifications, as he had also the subject-matter, for a perfect biography. Scarcely less fortunate are we in the 'Life of Scott.' The greatest figure in our nineteenth-century literature—with the possible exception of Byron—Sir Walter Scott was not only its most successful novelist and one of its most popular poets, but he had surveyed many fields of learning with amazing skill and industry. He had been brought into contact with all the notable men of his age. The biographer of Napoleon Bonaparte, the historian of Scotland, the editor of Swift and of Dryden

—scarcely one of his ninety volumes but still survives to charm and instruct. Lockhart, the biographer and son-in-law of Scott, had also every qualification for the task of biographer. His 'Life of Burns' still remains the most readable book on that poet—at least to the Southron. His novels, his criticisms, his many forms of literary activity had provided the precise equipment for an adequate estimate of Sir Walter Scott. Of Byron and of Shelley, of Cowper and of Wordsworth we have had many biographies, and shall probably have many more as new material concerning one or other of these writers is brought together by the enthusiast; but over the biographies of Johnson and of Scott the word 'finality' is written exceeding large.

With equal confidence may it be asserted that that word 'finality' is applicable to Mrs. Gaskell's 'Life of Charlotte Brontë.' There are those among the critical writers of to-day to whom the name of Charlotte Brontë conveys no magical significance, who have not been thrilled, as Thackeray was thrilled in one generation and Mr. Swinburne in another, by the extraordinary power and genius of the writer, the pathetically dramatic career of the woman. With these it may provoke a smile that any comparison should be instituted between the biography of Charlotte Brontë and the biographies of Johnson and of Scott. Her range of ideas was so much more limited, her influence so trivial in comparison, her work, in quantity at least, so far less significant. When this is admitted the fact remains that Charlotte Brontë wrote novels which more

than forty years after her death are eagerly read; novels which have now taken an indisputable place as classics, and classics not of a type that is limited to a handful of readers, but which still sell in countless thousands and in edition after edition.

Whatever may have been the sorrows of her life Charlotte Brontë was so far fortunate in death in that her biography was written by the one woman among her contemporaries who had the most genuine fitness for the task. The result was to solidify the reputation of both. Mrs. Gaskell will live not only by a number of interesting novels but also by this memoir of her friend. Charlotte Brontë would have lived in any case by her four powerful stories; but her fame has been made thrice secure through the ever popular biography of her from the pen of Mrs. Gaskell, of which we have here a new edition.

If it be granted that Mrs. Gaskell's 'Life of Charlotte Brontë' is a classic, it may be urged with pertinence that the rough hand of editor or annotator should never be placed upon a classic without apology. Justification may, however, be found, it is hoped, in the addition of new material unknown to the original author. If an apology is due it must be rendered first of all to the memory of Mrs. Gaskell and afterwards to her surviving friends and relatives. The editor has so far recognised this in that he has aimed at adding no single note or line that Mrs. Gaskell, were she still alive, would not, he believes, have cordially approved. He would urge further that Boswell's 'Johnson' was

edited within a few years of its author's death, with the result that no edition is now published that lacks the notes of Edmund Malone.[1] Malone added new letters and new facts, and thereby justified himself. Within a less lengthy period than has elapsed since the 'Life of Charlotte Brontë' was first published Boswell was edited—and, as Macaulay thought, *too much* edited—by Croker. It is an interesting fact, indeed—although it can have no analogy in the present case—that Boswell's 'Johnson' never sold in any considerable numbers until Croker had taken it in hand. The first editor thought it matter for congratulation that 'nearly four thousand copies' had been sold in thirteen years from the date of original publication.

Mrs. Gaskell's book has not failed of a large sale, and, it may be admitted, does very well as it stands. A justification for an annotated edition is not, however, difficult. Mrs. Gaskell, writing within a year or two of Miss Brontë's death, was compelled to reticences many of which have long ceased to have weight. Documents were withheld in many quarters which have since been handed to the present writer, and a number of Miss Brontë's admirers have written books in which they have supplemented in one form or another Mrs. Gaskell's narrative. Here is a list of the books to which I wish to acknowledge some indebtedness:—

[1] Full recognition has never been rendered to Malone's services. Within a few pages he throws light on Johnson's brother, corrects Boswell's carelessly picturesque remark that Johnson married a wife *double his age*, and moderates the biographer's disposition to toady to Lady Macclesfield.

1. *Charlotte Brontë : a Monograph.* By T. Wemyss Reid. Macmillan & Co., 1877.
2. *A Note on Charlotte Brontë.* By Algernon Charles Swinburne. Chatto & Windus, 1877.
3. *Haworth, Past and Present.* By J. Horsfall Turner. Brighouse: Jowett, 1879.
4. *Pictures of the Past.* By Francis H. Grundy. Griffith & Farran, 1879.
5. *Emily Brontë.* By A. Mary F. Robinson. W. H. Allen & Co., 1883.
6. *The Birthplace of Charlotte Brontë.* By William Scruton. Leeds: Fletcher, 1884.
7. *An Hour with Charlotte Brontë.* By Laura C. Holloway. Funk & Wagnalls, 1884.
8. *The Brontë Family, with special reference to Patrick Branwell Brontë.* By Francis A. Leyland. Hurst & Blackett, 1886.
9. *The Life of Charlotte Brontë.* By Augustine Birrell, Q.C., M.P. Walter Scott, 1887.
10. *The Brontë Country: its Topography, Antiquities, and History.* By J. A. Erskine Stuart. Longmans, Green, & Co., 1888.
11. *The Literary Shrines of Yorkshire.* By J. A. Erskine Stuart. Longmans, Green, & Co., 1892.
12. *The Brontës in Ireland.* By William Wright, D.D. Hodder & Stoughton, 1893.
13. *The Father of the Brontës.* By W. W. Yates. Leeds: F. R. Spark & Son, 1897.
14. *Brontiana: the Rev. Patrick Brontë, A.B., His Collected Works and Life.* Edited, &c., by J. Horsfall Turner. Bingley: T. Harrison & Sons, 1898.
15. *The Brontë Homeland.* By J. Ramsden. The Roxburghe Press, 1898.
16. *Thornton and the Brontës.* By William Scruton. Bradford: John Dale, 1898.
17. *The Brontë Society Publications.* Edited by Butler Wood. Bradford: M. Field & Sons, 1895–99.

To each of the above works I am indebted for certain facts incorporated in the notes, and I thank their authors accordingly. I have also to thank Mr. George Smith, of Messrs. Smith, Elder, & Co., for kindly placing at my disposal a number of hitherto unpublished letters

by Miss Brontë addressed either to him or to his firm. These new letters should alone, I think, give special interest to this new edition. Certain brief extracts from my own book[1] on the Brontës will also serve, I trust, to fill in sundry gaps in Mrs. Gaskell's singularly fascinating story.

. . . . . .

The life of Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell, Charlotte Brontë's biographer, has never been written, and the world is the poorer by a pleasing picture of womanliness and sympathetic charm in the literary life. A brief sketch by Professor A. W. Ward in the 'Dictionary of National Biography,' an occasional article by an admirer in this or that magazine, and now and again some more or less biographical 'Introduction' to one or other of her novels these sources furnish the few items of information that the world has been permitted to learn of one who must have been a singularly upright and noble-minded woman. Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell was the daughter of William Stevenson. She was born in Chelsea on September 29, 1812, and died at Holybourne, near Alton, in Hampshire, November 12, 1865. In 1832 she married the Rev. William Gaskell, a Unitarian minister of Manchester, and she had several children. This, in as few words as possible, is all that need be said here of her private life, apart from its relation to Charlotte Brontë. Of her books the first, 'Mary Barton,' was published anonymously in 1848, and

[1] *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle*, by Clement K. Shorter (Hodder & Stoughton).

'Wives and Daughters' was published in book form after her death in 1866. In the interval she had written 'Ruth' (1853), 'Cranford' (1853), 'North and South' (1855), 'Lizzie Leigh' (1855), 'Sylvia's Lovers' (1863), and 'Cousin Phillis' (1865). It is, however, with the 'Life of Charlotte Brontë,' written in 1856 and published in 1857, that we have here mainly to do.

Much of the correspondence which gave rise to Mrs. Gaskell's biography has already been published,[1] and it is therefore scarcely necessary to recapitulate. The letter in which Mr. Brontë definitely requested Mrs. Gaskell to undertake a biography of his daughter has, however, but just been unearthed.[2] It is an interesting contribution to the bibliography of the subject. Charlotte Brontë had died on the 31st of the previous March: --

TO MRS. GASKELL, MANCHESTER.

Haworth, near Keighley: June 16, 1855.

My dear Madam,—Finding that a great many scribblers, as well as some clever and truthful writers, have published articles in newspapers and tracts respecting my dear daughter Charlotte since her death, and seeing that many things that have been stated are untrue, but more false (*sic*); and having reason to think that some may venture to write her life who will be ill-qualified for the undertaking, I can see no better plan under the circumstances than to apply to some established author to write a brief account of her life and to make some remarks on her works. You seem to me to be the best qualified for doing what I wish should be done. If, therefore, you will be so kind as to publish a long

[1] In *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle*.

[2] The original is in the possession of Mr. George Smith, of Messrs. Smith, Elder, & Co.

or short account of her life and works, just as you may deem expedient and proper, Mr. Nicholls and I will give you such information as you may require.

I should expect and request that you would affix your name, so that the work might obtain a wide circulation and be handed down to the latest times. Whatever profits might arise from the sale would, of course, belong to you. You are the first to whom I have applied. Mr. Nicholls approves of the step I have taken, and could my daughter speak from the tomb I feel certain she would laud our choice.

Give my respectful regards to Mr. Gaskell and your family, and

Believe me, my dear Madam,
Yours very respectfully and truly,
P. Brontë.

Mrs. Gaskell, it is clear, accepted with zest. She had admired Charlotte Brontë as a woman as well as a novelist. Miss Brontë had been encouraged by her letters before the two had met. Here, for example, are extracts from letters by Charlotte to her friend Mr. Williams:—

The letter you forwarded this morning was from Mrs. Gaskell, authoress of 'Mary Barton;' she said I was not to answer it, but I cannot help doing so. The note brought the tears to my eyes. She is a good, she is a great woman. Proud am I that I can touch a chord of sympathy in souls so noble. In Mrs. Gaskell's nature it mournfully pleases me to fancy a remote affinity to my sister Emily. In Miss Martineau's mind I have always felt the same, though there are wide differences. Both these ladies are above me—certainly far my superiors in attainments and experience. I think I could look up to them if I knew them.[1]

[1] Letter to W. S. Williams dated November 20, 1849.

The note you sent yesterday was from Harriet Martineau; its contents were more than gratifying. I ought to be thankful, and I trust I am, for such testimonies of sympathy from the first order of minds. When Mrs. Gaskell tells me she shall keep my works as a treasure for her daughters, and when Harriet Martineau testifies affectionate approbation, I feel the sting taken from the strictures of another class of critics. My resolution of seclusion withholds me from communicating further with these ladies at present, but I now know how they are inclined to me—I know how my writings have affected their wise and pure minds. The knowledge is present support and, perhaps, may be future armour.[1]

Miss Brontë and Mrs. Gaskell first met at the house of a common friend, Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, the Briery, Windermere, on August 10, 1850. The friendship then formed was cemented by an exchange of visits. Miss Brontë visited Mrs. Gaskell in her Manchester home first in 1851, and afterwards in 1853, and in the autumn of 1853 Mrs. Gaskell stayed at the Parsonage at Haworth. Other aspects of their friendship are pleasantly treated of in the 'Life.'

To trace the growth, bibliographically, of Mrs. Gaskell's famous book is an easy task. From the moment that she received Mr. Brontë's request the author of 'Mary Barton' set to work with enthusiasm. She wrote letter after letter to every friend connected with the Brontë story—to Mr. George Smith, the publisher, to Mr. Smith Williams, that publisher's literary adviser, to Ellen Nussey and Mary Taylor, Charlotte Brontë's old schoolfellows at Roe Head, to Margaret

[1] Letter to W. S. Williams dated November 29, 1849.

Wooler, her old schoolmistress, and to Lætitia Wheelwright, the friend of her Brussels life. All the correspondence has been preserved, and copies of it are in my hands. It relates with delightful enthusiasm the writer's experience in biography-making. Her visits to Miss Nussey and Miss Wooler secured to her a number of Miss Brontë's letters. She thus acknowledges—on Sept. 6, 1856—those that Miss Nussey lent to her :—

> I have read *once* over all the letters you so kindly entrusted me with, and I don't think even you, her most cherished friend, could wish the impression on me to be different from what it is, that she was one to study the path of duty well, and, having ascertained what it was right to do, to follow out her idea strictly. They gave me a very beautiful idea of her character. I like the one you sent to-day much. I shall be glad to see any others you will allow me to see. I am sure the more fully she—Charlotte Brontë—the *friend*, the *daughter*, the *sister*, the *wife*, is known, and known where need be in her own words, the more highly will she be appreciated.

There are many sentences of this character in the correspondence. She is particularly pleased with the letters to Mr. W. Smith Williams ; 'They are very fine and genial.' 'Miss Brontë seems heartily at her ease with him,' she says to another friend. 'I like the series of letters which you have sent better than any others that I have seen,' she writes to Mr. Williams, 'the subjects, too, are very interesting. How beautifully she speaks, for instance, of her wanderings on the moors after her sister's death.'

But Mrs. Gaskell's energy did not confine itself to

obtaining correspondence. She went to Haworth again and again, staying at the 'Black Bull' with her husband. She visited the Chapter Coffee-House in Paternoster Row, 'where Charlotte and Anne Brontë took up their abode on that first hurried rush to London.[1] She went to Brussels and had a prolonged conversation with M. Héger, 'and very much indeed I both like and respect him.' Never surely was a more conscientious effort to produce a biography in which thoroughness and accuracy should have a part with good writing and sympathetic interpretation.

At first, indeed, it seemed as if a perfect success crowned Mrs. Gaskell's efforts. The book was published in two volumes, under the title of the 'Life of Charlotte Brontë,' in the spring of 1857. It went into a second edition immediately, the addition of a single foot note concerning 'Tabby' being the only variation between the two issues. Not only the public but the intimate relations and friends appeared to be satisfied. Mr. Brontë wrote the following letter to Mr. George Smith, of Smith, Elder, & Co.:—

TO GEORGE SMITH, ESQ., CORNHILL, LONDON.

Haworth, near Keighley: March 30, 1857.

Dear Sir,—I thank you and Mrs. Gaskell for the biographical books you have sent me. I have read them with a high degree of melancholy interest, and consider them amongst the ablest, most interesting, and best works of the kind. Mrs. Gaskell, though moving in what was to her a new line—a somewhat critical matter—has done herself great credit by this biographical work, which I doubt not will

[1] The Chapter Coffee-House was destroyed a few months after Mrs. Gaskell's visit.

place her higher in literary fame even than she stood before. Notwithstanding that I have formed my own opinion, from which the critics cannot shake me, I am curious to know what they may say. I will thank you, therefore, to send me two or three newspapers containing criticisms on the biography, and I will remit the price of them to you in letter stamps.

I remain, dear Sir, yours respectfully and truly,

P. BRONTË.

And to the author of the book he wrote with even stronger expressions of satisfaction:—

TO MRS. GASKELL, MANCHESTER.

Haworth, near Keighley: April 2, 1857.

My dear Madam,—I thank you for the books you have sent me containing the Memoir of my daughter. I have perused them with a degree of pleasure and pain which can be known only to myself. As you will have the opinion of abler critics than myself I shall not say much in the way of criticism. I shall only make a few remarks in unison with the feelings of my heart. With a tenacity of purpose usual with me, in all cases of importance, I was fully determined that the biography of my daughter should, if possible, be written by one not unworthy of the undertaking. My mind first turned to you, and you kindly acceded to my wishes. Had you refused I would have applied to the next best, and so on; and had all applications failed, as the last resource, though above eighty years of age and feeble, and unfit for the task, I would myself have written a short though inadequate memoir, rather than have left all to selfish, hostile, or ignorant scribblers. But the work is now done, and done rightly, as I wished it to be, and in its completion has afforded me more satisfaction than I have felt during many years of a life in which has been exemplified the saying that 'man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upwards.' You have not only given a picture of my dear daughter Charlotte, but of my dear wife, and all my dear children, and such a picture, too, as is full of truth and life. The picture of my

brilliant and unhappy son is a masterpiece. Indeed, all the pictures in the work have vigorous, truthful, and delicate touches in them, which could have been executed only by a skilful female hand. There are a few trifling mistakes, which, should it be deemed necessary, may be corrected in the second edition. Mr. Nicholls joins me in kind and respectful regards to you, Mr. Gaskell, and your family, wishing your greatest good in both the words.

I remain, my dear Madam,
Yours respectfully and truly,
P. Brontë.

Miss Mary Taylor acknowledged the book from her home in New Zealand as follows :—

TO MRS. GASKELL, MANCHESTER.

Wellington : July 30, 1857.

My dear Mrs. Gaskell,—I am unaccountably in receipt by post of two volumes containing the Life of C. Brontë. I have pleasure in attributing this compliment to you ; I beg, therefore, to thank you for them. The book is a perfect success, in giving a true picture of a melancholy life, and you have practically answered my puzzle as to how you would give an account of her, not being at liberty to give a true description of those around. Though not so gloomy as the truth, it is perhaps as much so as people will accept without calling it exaggerated, and feeling the desire to doubt and contradict it. I have seen two reviews of it. One of them sums it up as 'a life of poverty and self-suppression,' the other has nothing to the purpose at all. Neither of them seems to think it a strange or wrong state of things that a woman of first-rate talents, industry, and integrity should live all her life in a walking nightmare of 'poverty and self-suppression.' I doubt whether any of them will.

It must upset most people's notions of beauty to be told that the portrait at the beginning is that of an ugly woman. I do not altogether like the idea of publishing a flattered

likeness. I had rather the mouth and eyes had been nearer together, and shown the veritable square face and large, disproportionate nose.

I had the impression that Cartwright's mill was burnt in 1820, not in 1812. You give much too favourable an account of the black-coated and Tory savages that kept the people down and provoked excesses in those days. Old Roberson said he 'would wade to the knees in blood rather than the then state of things should be altered'—a state including Corn law, Test law, and a host of other oppressions.

Once more I thank you for the book—the first copy, I believe, that arrived in New Zealand.

Sincerely yours,
MARY TAYLOR.

'All the notices that I have seen have been favourable,' wrote Mrs. Gaskell to a friend on April 15, 1857, 'and some of the last exceedingly so. I have had a considerable number of letters, too, from distinguished men, expressing high approval.[1] Mr. Brontë, too, I am happy to say, is pleased.'

[1] A letter from Charles Kingsley to Mrs. Gaskell is published in his *Life* by Mrs. Kingsley :—

'Let me renew our long interrupted acquaintance,' he writes from St. Leonards, under date May 14, 1857, 'by complimenting you on poor Miss Brontë's *Life*. You have had a delicate and a great work to do, and you have done it admirably. Be sure that the book will do good. It will shame literary people into some stronger belief that a simple, virtuous, practical home life is consistent with high imaginative genius; and it will shame, too, the prudery of a not over cleanly though carefully white-washed age, into believing that purity is now (as in all ages till now) quite compatible with the knowledge of evil. I confess that the book has made me ashamed of myself. *Jane Eyre* I hardly looked into, very seldom reading a work of fiction—yours, indeed, and Thackeray's are the only ones I care to open. *Shirley* disgusted me at the opening, and I gave up the writer and her books with a notion that she was a person who liked coarseness. How I misjudged her! and how thankful

But within a few weeks Mrs. Gaskell found herself in a veritable 'hornets' nest'—as she expressed it. She visited Italy the moment her task was completed, and during April and May of the year 1857 her publishers had to bear the brunt of a considerable number of lawyers' letters. Mr. Carus Wilson commenced an action about the Cowan Bridge School; Miss Martineau wrote sheet after sheet regarding the misunderstanding between her and Miss Brontë. A Lady Scott (Mrs. Robinson, of Thorp Green), whose name had been unpleasantly associated with Branwell Brontë on the strength of statements in his sisters' letters, wrote through her lawyer demanding an apology. That last scandal is discussed at length in Miss Mary F. Robinson's 'Emily Brontë,' Mr. Leyland's 'Brontë Family,' and in 'Charlotte Brontë and her Circle.' It need not be further referred to here, as the modification that its correction necessitated in the third edition of the 'Memoir' in no way impaired, but indeed materially improved, the artistic value of the book. A comparison of the third edition with its predecessors, while it reveals on the one side omissions amounting to a couple of pages, shows also the addition of new letters and of much fresh information. The present publishers have felt, in any case, that having once withdrawn

I am that I never put a word of my misconceptions into print, or recorded my misjudgments of one who is a whole heaven above me.

'Well have you done your work, and given us the picture of a valiant woman made perfect by suffering. I shall now read carefully and lovingly every word she has written, especially those poems, which ought not to have fallen dead as they did, and which seem to be (from a review in the current *Fraser*) of remarkable strength and purity.'

the earlier issues of the book as containing statements considered to be libellous, they could not be responsible for a republication of those statements. This edition is, therefore, an exact reproduction of the third edition, the only changes being the substitution of the name Ellen for the initial 'E.,' and of 'Miss Wooler' for 'Miss W.,' changes which, although trifling, will, it is believed, save the reader some irritation. In the few cases of necessary verification in which a name has been added in the text it is placed in brackets. The notes, which the Editor has endeavoured to make as few as possible, are so printed that they can be completely ignored when desired.

Two hitherto unpublished letters of Mr. Brontë's fittingly close the correspondence to which Mrs. Gaskell's 'Memoir' gave rise.

TO GEORGE SMITH, ESQ., 65 CORNHILL, LONDON.

Haworth, near Keighley: Sept. 4, 1857.

My dear Sir,—I thank you for the books which I have just received; Mr. Nicholls also sends his thanks for those you have given to him. As far as I have gone through the third edition of the 'Memoir' I am much pleased with it. I hope it will give general satisfaction. Should you see any reviews worth notice be so kind as to let me have them, as I am rather anxious to know what the sage critics may deem it expedient in their wisdom to say. I hope that by this time Mrs. Smith has fully recovered her health. Your anxiety on her account must be very great. Mr. Nicholls joins me in kind and respectful regards.

Yours very respectfully and truly,

P. Brontë.

TO GEORGE SMITH, ESQ., 65 CORNHILL, LONDON.

Haworth, near Keighley: March 26, 1860.

My dear Sir,—Though writing is to me now something of a task I cannot avoid sending you a few lines to thank you for sending me the magazines, and for your gentlemanly conduct towards my daughter Charlotte in all your transactions with her, from first to last. All the numbers of the magazines were good; the last especially attracted my attention and excited my admiration. The 'Last Sketch' took full possession of my mind. Mr. Thackeray in his remarks in it has excelled even himself. He has written *multum in parvo, dignissima cedro*. And what he has written does honour both to his head and heart. Thank him kindly both in Mr. Nicholls's name and mine. Amongst the various articles that have been written in reference to my family and me it has pleased some of the writers, for want of more important matter, to set up an ideal target for me as a mark to shoot at. In their practice a few have drawn the long bow with a vengeance, and made declensions very ridiculously wide; others have used the surer rifle and come nearer the mark; but all have proved that there is still space left for improvement, both in theory and practice. Had I but half Mr. Thackeray's talents in giving a photograph likeness of human nature I might have selected and might yet select a choice number of these practising volunteers, and, whether they liked it or not, give their portraits to the curious public. If organless spirits see as we see, and feel as we feel, in this material clogging world, my daughter Charlotte's spirit will receive additional happiness on scanning the remarks of her Ancient Favourite. In the last letter I received from you you mentioned that Mrs. Smith was in delicate health; I hope that she is now well. I need scarcely request you to excuse all faults in this hasty scrawl, since a man in his eighty-fourth year generally lets his age plead his apology.

I remain, my dear Sir,

Yours very respectfully and truly,

P. Brontë.

'I did so long to tell the truth,' writes Mrs. Gaskell to a friend on her return from Rome, 'and I believe *now* that I hit as near the truth as any one *could*. I weighed every line with my whole power and heart, so that every line should go to its great purpose of making *her* known and valued as one who had gone through such a terrible life with a brave and faithful heart. One comfort is that God knows the truth.'

CLEMENT K. SHORTER.

March 19, 1900.

I have to thank Mr. J. J. STEAD, of Heckmondwike, Yorkshire, and Mr. BUTLER WOOD, of the Free Library, Bradford, for valuable suggestions; I am grateful to Mr. ROGER INGPEN for giving the book an Index for the first time, and thereby saving me from the anathema which has been passed upon unindexed books; I have above all to express my obligations to the Rev. A. B. NICHOLLS, Charlotte Brontë's husband, for kind and generous assistance in this as in my previous attempt to throw new light upon his wife's career.

A BRONTË CHRONOLOGY

Patrick Brontë born	March 17, 1777
Maria Brontë born	1783
Patrick leaves Ireland for Cambridge	1802
Degree of A.B.	1806
Curacy at Wethersfield, Essex	1806
.. Wellington, Salop	1809
.. Dewsbury, Yorks	1809
,, Hartshead-cum-Clifton	1811
Publishes 'Cottage Poems' (Halifax)	1811
Married to Maria Branwell	Dec. 29, 1812
First Child, Maria, born	1813
Publishes 'The Rural Minstrel'	1813
Elizabeth born	1814
Publishes the 'Cottage in the Wood'	1815
Curacy at Thornton	1816
Charlotte Brontë born at Thornton	April 21, 1816
Patrick Branwell Brontë born	1817
Emily Jane Brontë born	July 30, 1818
'The Maid of Killarney' published	1818
Anne Brontë born	January 17, 1820
Removal to Incumbency of Haworth	February 1820
Mrs. Brontë died	September 15, 1821
Maria and Elizabeth Brontë at Cowan Bridge	July 1824
Charlotte and Emily ,, ,,	September 1824
Leave Cowan Bridge	1825
Maria Brontë died	May 6, 1825
Elizabeth Brontë died	June 15, 1825
Charlotte Brontë at School, Roe Head	January 1831
Leaves Roe Head School	1832
First Visit to Ellen Nussey at The Rydings	September 1832
Returns to Roe Head as Governess	July 29, 1835
Branwell visits London	1835
Emily spends three months at Roe Head, when Anne takes her place and she returns home	1835

Miss Wooler's School removed to Dewsbury Moor . . . 1836
Emily at a School at Halifax for six months (Miss Patchett of Law Hill) 1836
First Proposal of Marriage (Henry Nussey) . . . March 1839
Anne Brontë becomes governess at Blake Hall, Mrs. Ingham's . . . . . April 1839
Charlotte governess at Mrs. Sidgwick's at Stonegappe, and at Swarcliffe, Harrogate 1839
Second Proposal of Marriage (Mr. Bryce) 1839
Charlotte and Emily at Haworth, Anne at Blake Hall . . 1840
Charlotte's second situation as governess with Mrs. White, Upperwood House, Rawdon . . . . . March 1841
Charlotte and Emily go to School at Brussels . . February 1842
Miss Branwell died at Haworth . . . . . Oct. 29, 1842
Charlotte and Emily return to Haworth . . . . Nov. 1842
Charlotte returns to Brussels . . . . . Jan. 1843
Returns to Haworth . . . . . Jan. 1844
Anne and Branwell at Thorp Green 1845
Charlotte visits Mary Taylor at Hunsworth 1845
Visits Ellen Nussey at Brookroyd 1845
Publication of Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell . 1846
Charlotte Brontë visits Manchester with her Father for him to see an Oculist . . . . . Aug. 1846
'Jane Eyre' published (Smith, Elder & Co.) . . Oct. 1847
'Wuthering Heights' and 'Agnes Grey' (Newby) . . Dec. 1847
Charlotte and Anne visit London . . . . . June 1848
'Tenant of Wildfell Hall' 1848
Branwell died . . . . . Sept. 24, 1848
Emily died . . . . . Dec. 19, 1848
Anne Brontë died at Scarborough . . . . . May 28, 1849
'Shirley' published 1849
Visit to London, first meeting with Thackeray . . . Nov. 1849
Visit to London, sits for Portrait to Richmond 1850
Third Proposal of Marriage (James Taylor) 1851
Visit to London for Exhibition 1851
'Villette' published 1853
Visit to London 1853
Visit to Manchester to Mrs. Gaskell 1853
Marriage . . . . . June 29, 1854
Death . . . . . March 31, 1855
Patrick Brontë died . . . . . June 7, 1861

Facsimile of the Title-page of the First Edition.

THE LIFE

OF

CHARLOTTE BRONTË,

AUTHOR OF

"JANE EYRE," "SHIRLEY," "VILLETTE," &c.

BY

E. C. GASKELL,
AUTHOR OF "MARY BARTON," "RUTH," &c.

"Oh my God,
——— Thou hast knowledge, only Thou,
How dreary 'tis for women to sit still
On winter nights by solitary fires
And hear the nations praising them far off."
AURORA LEIGH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
SMITH, ELDER & CO., 65, CORNHILL.

1857.

[*The right of Translation is reserved.*]

LIFE

OF

CHARLOTTE BRONTË

CHAPTER I

The Leeds and Skipton railway runs along a deep valley of the Aire; a slow and sluggish stream, compared with the neighbouring river of Wharfe. Keighley station is on this line of railway, about a quarter of a mile from the town of the same name. The number of inhabitants and the importance of Keighley have been very greatly increased during the last twenty years, owing to the rapidly extended market for worsted manufactures, a branch of industry that mainly employs the factory population of this part of Yorkshire, which has Bradford for its centre and metropolis.

Keighley[1] is in process of transformation from a populous old-fashioned village into a still more populous and flourishing

[1] The population of Keighley was 13,378 in 1841, 21,859 in 1861, and 30,810 in 1891. Keighley is now a borough and is growing very rapidly. The old narrow streets have disappeared to a far greater extent than at the time when Mrs. Gaskell visited the town. Keighley at present boasts many wide and handsome thoroughfares. There are several extensive machine works and two public parks. A large educational institute has grown out of the old Mechanics' Institute, from which the Brontës were accustomed to borrow books. The station is no longer 'about a quarter of a mile from the town,' the intervening space being now covered with houses.

town. It is evident to the stranger that, as the gable-ended houses, which obtrude themselves corner-wise on the widening street, fall vacant, they are pulled down to allow of greater space for traffic and a more modern style of architecture. The quaint and narrow shop-windows of fifty years ago are giving way to large panes and plate-glass. Nearly every dwelling seems devoted to some branch of commerce. In passing hastily through the town, one hardly perceives where the necessary lawyer and doctor can live, so little appearance is there of any dwellings of the professional middle-class, such as abound in our old cathedral towns. In fact, nothing can be more opposed than the state of society, the modes of thinking, the standards of reference on all points of morality, manners, and even politics and religion, in such a new manufacturing place as Keighley in the north, and any stately, sleepy, picturesque cathedral town in the south. Yet the aspect of Keighley promises well for future stateliness, if not picturesqueness. Grey stone abounds, and the rows of houses built of it have a kind of solid grandeur connected with their uniform and enduring lines. The framework of the doors and the lintels of the windows, even in the smallest dwellings, are made of blocks of stone. There is no painted wood to require continual beautifying, or else present a shabby aspect; and the stone is kept scrupulously clean by the notable Yorkshire housewives. Such glimpses into the interior as a passer-by obtains reveal a rough abundance of the means of living, and diligent and active habits in the women. But the voices of the people are hard, and their tones discordant, promising little of the musical taste that distinguishes the district, and which has already furnished a Carrodus [1] to the musical world. The names over the shops (of which the one just given is a sample) seem strange even to an inhabitant of the neighbouring county, and have a peculiar smack and flavour of the place.

[1] John Tiplady Carrodus (1836–95), a famous violinist, born at Braithwaite, near Keighley.

The town of Keighley never quite melts into country on the road to Haworth, although the houses become more sparse as the traveller journeys upwards to the grey round hills that seem to bound his journey in a westerly direction. First come some villas, just sufficiently retired from the road to show that they can scarcely belong to any one liable to be summoned in a hurry, at the call of suffering or danger, from his comfortable fireside; the lawyer, the doctor, and the clergyman live at hand, and hardly in the suburbs, with a screen of shrubs for concealment.

In a town one does not look for vivid colouring; what there may be of this is furnished by the wares in the shops, not by foliage or atmospheric effects; but in the country some brilliancy and vividness seems to be instinctively expected, and there is consequently a slight feeling of disappointment at the grey natural tint of every object, near or far off, on the way from Keighley to Haworth. The distance is about four miles; and, as I have said, what with villas, great worsted factories, rows of workmen's houses, with here and there an old-fashioned farmhouse and outbuildings, it can hardly be called 'country' any part of the way. For two miles the road passes over tolerably level ground; distant hills on the left, a 'beck' flowing through meadows on the right, and furnishing water power, at certain points, to the factories built on its banks. The air is dim and lightless with the smoke from all these habitations and places of business. The soil in the valley (or 'bottom,' to use the local term) is rich; but as the road begins to ascend the vegetation becomes poorer; it does not flourish, it merely exists; and instead of trees there are only bushes and shrubs about the dwellings. Stone dykes are everywhere used in place of hedges; and what crops there are, on the patches of arable land, consist of pale, hungry-looking, grey-green oats. Right before the traveller on this road rises Haworth village;[1] he can see it for two miles before he arrives, for it

[1] Haworth had a population of 6,303 in 1841. It had declined to 5,896 in 1861, but contained a population of 8,023 in 1891.

is situated on the side of a pretty steep hill, with a background of dun and purple moors, rising and sweeping away yet higher than the church, which is built at the very summit of the long narrow street. All round the horizon there is this same line of sinuous wave-like hills, the scoops into which they fall only revealing other hills beyond, of similar colour and shape, crowned with wild bleak moors—grand from the ideas of solitude and loneliness which they suggest, or oppressive from the feeling which they give of being pent up by some monotonous and illimitable barrier, according to the mood of mind in which the spectator may be.

For a short distance the road appears to turn away from Haworth, as it winds round the base of the shoulder of a hill; but then it crosses a bridge over the 'beck,' and the ascent through the village begins. The flagstones with which it is paved are placed endways, in order to give a better hold to the horses' feet; and even with this help they seem to be in constant danger of slipping backwards. The old stone houses are high compared with the width of the street, which makes an abrupt turn before reaching the more level ground at the head of the village, so that the steep aspect of the place, in one part, is almost like that of a wall. But this surmounted, the church lies a little off the main road on the left; a hundred yards or so and the driver relaxes his care, and the horse breathes more easily, as they pass into the quiet little by-street that leads to Haworth Parsonage. The churchyard is on one side of this lane, the schoolhouse and the sexton's dwelling (where the curates formerly lodged) on the other.

The parsonage stands at right angles to the road, facing down upon the church; so that, in fact, parsonage, church, and belfried schoolhouse form three sides of an irregular oblong, of which the fourth is open to the fields and moors that lie beyond. The area of this oblong is filled up by a crowded churchyard, and a small garden or court in front of the clergyman's house. As the entrance to this from the road is at the side, the path goes round the corner into the

DISTANT VIEW OF HAWORTH.

little plot of ground. Underneath the windows is a narrow flower-border, carefully tended in days of yore, although only the most hardy plants could be made to grow there. Within the stone wall, which keeps out the surrounding churchyard, are bushes of elder and lilac; the rest of the ground is occupied by a square grass-plot and a gravel walk. The house is of grey stone, two stories high, heavily roofed with flags, in order to resist the winds that might strip off a lighter covering. It appears to have been built about a hundred years ago, and to consist of four rooms on each story; the two windows on the right (as the visitor stands with his back to the church, ready to enter in at the front door) belonging to Mr. Brontë's study, the two on the left to the family sitting-room. Everything about the place tells of the most dainty order, the most exquisite cleanliness. The doorsteps are spotless; the small old-fashioned window-panes glitter like looking-glass. Inside and outside of that house cleanliness goes up into its essence, purity.[1]

The church lies, as I mentioned, above most of the houses in the village; and the graveyard rises above the church, and is terribly full of upright tombstones. The chapel or church claims greater antiquity than any other in that part of the kingdom; but there is no appearance of this in the external aspect of the present edifice, unless it be in the two eastern windows, which remain unmodernised, and in the lower part of the steeple. Inside, the character of the

[1] An entirely different aspect is afforded to-day. Trees have been planted, much money has been spent in careful gardening, and a large dining-room, extending from back to front, has been built in the side of the house nearest the road. There was a gateway, now bricked up, but traceable at the end of the garden, from which the churchyard could be entered, but this gateway was only opened for the carrying out of the dead. It was opened for Mrs. Brontë, Miss Branwell, Patrick, Emily, Charlotte, and their father successively.

The incumbency of Haworth, after Mr. Brontë's death in 1861, passed to the Rev. John Wade, who occupied the parsonage until 1898, when he resigned and was succeeded by the Rev. T. W. Storey, who up to that time had been senior curate of the Bradford Parish Church.

pillars shows that they were constructed before the reign of Henry VII. It is probable that there existed on this ground a 'field-kirk,' or oratory, in the earliest times; and, from the Archbishop's registry at York, it is ascertained that there was a chapel at Haworth in 1317. The inhabitants refer inquirers concerning the date to the following inscription on a stone in the church tower:—

'Hic fecit Cœnobium Monachorum Auteste fundator. A.D. sexcentissimo.'

That is to say, before the preaching of Christianity in Northumbria. Whitaker says that this mistake originated in the illiterate copying out, by some modern stonecutter, of an inscription in the character of Henry VIII.'s time on an adjoining stone:—

'Orate pro bono statu Eutest Tod.'

'Now every antiquary knows that the formula of prayer "bono statu" always refers to the living. I suspect this singular Christian name has been mistaken by the stone-cutter for Austet, a contraction of Eustatius, but the word Tod, which has been mis-read for the Arabic figures 600, is perfectly fair and legible. On the presumption of this foolish claim to antiquity, the people would needs set up for independence, and contest the right of the Vicar of Bradford to nominate a curate at Haworth.'

I have given this extract in order to explain the imaginary groundwork of a commotion which took place in Haworth about five-and-thirty years ago, to which I shall have occasion to allude again more particularly.

The interior of the church is commonplace;[1] it is neither

[1] The church as the Brontës knew it dated only from 1755, when it was built by the Rev. William Grimshaw, who also built a now demolished Wesleyan chapel at Haworth. In 1879 a certain Michael Merrell offered five thousand pounds towards the rebuilding of the church, it having been urged that the accommodation was insufficient for the would-be worshippers. The offer was too tempting for the then incumbent, Mr. Wade, to resist. Brontë enthusiasts were voluble, but they did not answer the incumbent's challenge that they should first raise money and then make a counter-proposal. Articles and letters of protest appeared in the London *Standard* (throughout April 1879) and in the *Leeds Mercury* (April 3, April 30, June 20, 1879); and a public meeting was held at

old enough nor modern enough to compel notice. The pews are of black oak, with high divisions; and the names of those to whom they belong are painted in white letters on the doors. There are neither brasses, nor altar-tombs, nor monuments, but there is a mural tablet [1] on the right-hand side of the Communion table, bearing the following inscription:—

HERE
LIE THE REMAINS OF
MARIA BRONTË, WIFE
OF THE
REV. P. BRONTË, A.B., MINISTER OF HAWORTH.
HER SOUL
DEPARTED TO THE SAVIOUR, SEPT. 15TH, 1821,
IN THE 39TH YEAR OF HER AGE.

'Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh.'—MATTHEW xxiv. 44.

ALSO HERE LIE THE REMAINS OF
MARIA BRONTË, DAUGHTER OF THE AFORESAID;
SHE DIED ON THE
6TH OF MAY, 1825, IN THE 12TH YEAR OF HER AGE;

Haworth, at which a resolution condemning the proposed destruction of the church was carried by a large majority. The advocates of demolition triumphed, however. The Consistory Court for the Diocese of Ripon, with which the ultimate decision lay, decided for rebuilding, and what might have been to-day a pathetic memorial of a remarkable family was doomed to destruction. It would have been easy to find a fresh site for a new church, and to retain the old one, as has been done at Shaftesbury and in many other English towns, but the church in which Mr. Brontë preached and his daughters worshipped for so many years has been entirely destroyed. The tower—the only genuinely old portion of the structure—was preserved. The closing services at Haworth Old Church took place on September 14, 1879, and the new church was consecrated on February 22, 1881.

[1] The mural tablet here referred to was probably broken up at the time of the destruction of the old church. Sundry pew doors, lamp brackets, and other mementos of the old church, after having been long in the possession of a dealer, were disposed of by auction at Sotheby's sale rooms in London on July 2, 1898.

AND OF

ELIZABETH BRONTË, HER SISTER,

WHO DIED JUNE 15TH, 1825, IN THE 11TH YEAR OF HER AGE.

'Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' MATTHEW xviii. 3.

HERE ALSO LIE THE REMAINS OF

PATRICK BRANWELL BRONTË,

WHO DIED SEPT. 24TH, 1848, AGED 30 YEARS;

AND OF

EMILY JANE BRONTË,

WHO DIED DEC. 19TH, 1848, AGED 29 YEARS,

SON AND DAUGHTER OF THE

REV. P. BRONTË, INCUMBENT.

THIS STONE IS ALSO DEDICATED TO THE

MEMORY OF ANNE BRONTË,[1]

YOUNGEST DAUGHTER OF THE REV. P. BRONTË, A.B.

SHE DIED, AGED 27 YEARS, MAY 28TH, 1849,

AND WAS BURIED AT THE OLD CHURCH, SCARBORO'.

At the upper part of this tablet ample space is allowed between the lines of the inscription; when the first memorials were written down, the survivors, in their fond affection, thought little of the margin and verge they were leaving for those who were still living. But as one dead member of the household follows another fast to the grave the lines are

[1] A reviewer pointed out the discrepancy between the age (twenty-seven years) assigned, on the mural tablet, to Anne Brontë at the time of her death in 1849, and the alleged fact that she was born at Thornton, from which place Mr. Brontë removed on February 25, 1820. I was aware of the discrepancy, but I did not think it of sufficient consequence to be rectified by an examination of the register of births. Mr. Brontë's own words, on which I grounded my statement as to the time of Anne Brontë's birth, are as follows:—

'In Thornton Charlotte, Patrick Branwell, Emily Jane, and Anne were born.' And such of the inhabitants of Haworth as have spoken on the subject say that all the children of Mr. and Mrs. Brontë were born before they removed to Haworth. There is probably some mistake in the inscription on the tablet.—*Note by Mrs. Gaskell.*

HAWORTH OLD CHURCH AS THE BRONTË FAMILY KNEW IT.

pressed together, and the letters become small and cramped. After the record of Anne's death there is room for no other.

But one more of that generation—the last of that nursery of six little motherless children—was yet to follow, before the survivor, the childless and widowed father, found his rest. On another tablet, below the first, the following record has been added to that mournful list :—

ADJOINING LIE THE REMAINS OF
CHARLOTTE, WIFE
OF THE
REV. ARTHUR BELL NICHOLLS, A.B.,
AND DAUGHTER OF THE REV. P. BRONTË, A.B., INCUMBENT.
SHE DIED MARCH 31ST, 1855, IN THE 39TH
YEAR OF HER AGE.[1]

[1] In the month of April 1858 a neat mural tablet was erected within the Communion railing of the Church at Haworth, to the memory of the deceased members of the Brontë family. The tablet is of white Carrara marble on a ground of dove-coloured marble, with a cornice surmounted by an ornamental pediment of chaste design. Between the brackets which support the tablet is inscribed the sacred monogram I.H.S. in Old English letters.

This tablet, which corrects the error in the former tablet as to the age of Anne Brontë, bears the following inscription in Roman letters, the initials, however, being in Old English :—

'In Memory of

'Maria, wife of the Rev. P. Brontë, A.B., Minister of Haworth. She died Sept. 15th, 1821, in the 39th year of her age.

'Also of Maria, their daughter, who died May 6th, 1825, in the 12th year of her age.

'Also of Elizabeth, their daughter, who died June 15th, 1825, in the 11th year of her age.

'Also of Patrick Branwell, their son, who died Sept. 24th, 1848, aged 31 years.

'Also of Emily Jane, their daughter, who died Dec. 19th, 1848, aged 30 years.

'Also of Anne, their daughter, who died May 28th, 1849, aged 29 years. She was buried at the Old Church, Scarborough.

'Also of Charlotte, their daughter, wife of the Rev. A. B. Nicholls, B.A. She died March 31st, 1855, in the 39th year of her age.

'"The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But

thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."—1 Cor. xv. 56, 57.'—*Note by Mrs. Gaskell.*

None of the birthdays are given, it will be seen, on either tablet. There was no register of births at the time, only of christenings, and hence exact dates are not obtainable in the case of Mrs. Brontë and her son.

Maria Brontë, the mother of Charlotte Brontë, was born at Penzance, 1782.

Maria Brontë, the sister of Charlotte, was born at Hartshead, April 16, 1813.

Elizabeth Brontë, the second sister of Charlotte, was born at Hartshead, July 27, 1814.

Charlotte Brontë was born at Thornton, April 21, 1816.

Patrick Branwell Brontë was born at Thornton. He was baptised July 23, 1817.

Emily Jane Brontë was born at Thornton, July 30, 1818.

Anne Brontë was born at Thornton, January 17, 1820.

The tablet to which Mrs. Gaskell refers as having been erected in 1858 contains the additional inscription, which was, of course, added after the *Life* was written—

'Also of the aforenamed Revd. P. Brontë, A.B., who died June 7, 1861, in the 85th year of his age; having been incumbent of Haworth for upward of 41 years.'

There is also a brass tablet over the Brontë grave in the church with the following inscription:—

'In memory of Emily Jane Brontë, who died December 19, 1848, aged thirty years; and of Charlotte Brontë, born April 21, 1816, and died March 31, 1855.'

CHAPTER II

For a right understanding of the life of my dear friend, Charlotte Brontë, it appears to me more necessary in her case than in most others that the reader should be made acquainted with the peculiar forms of population and society amidst which her earliest years were passed, and from which both her own and her sisters' first impressions of human life must have been received. I shall endeavour, therefore, before proceeding further with my work, to present some idea of the character of the people of Haworth and the surrounding districts.

Even an inhabitant of the neighbouring county of Lancaster is struck by the peculiar force of character which the Yorkshiremen display.[1] This makes them interesting as a race; while, at the same time, as individuals the remarkable degree of self-sufficiency they possess gives them an air of independence rather apt to repel a stranger. I use this expression 'self-sufficiency' in the largest sense. Conscious of the strong sagacity and the dogged power of will which seem almost the birthright of the natives of the West Riding, each man relies upon himself, and seeks no help at the hands of his neighbour. From rarely requiring the assistance of others, he comes to doubt the power of bestowing it; from the general success of his efforts, he grows to depend upon them, and to over-esteem his own energy and power. He

[1] 'Some of the West Ridingers are very angry,' Miss Nussey wrote to Mrs. Gaskell a few months after the first edition of the 'Memoir' was published, 'and declare they are half a century in civilisation before some of the Lancashire folk, and that this neighbourhood is a paradise compared with some districts not far from Manchester.'

belongs to that keen yet short-sighted class who consider suspicion of all whose honesty is not proved as a sign of wisdom. The practical qualities of a man are held in great respect; but the want of faith in strangers and untried modes of action extends itself even to the manner in which the virtues are regarded: and if they produce no immediate and tangible result, they are rather put aside as unfit for this busy, striving world, especially if they are more of a passive than an active character. The affections are strong and their foundations lie deep: but they are not—such affections seldom are—wide-spreading; nor do they show themselves on the surface. Indeed, there is little display of any of the amenities of life among this wild rough population. Their accost is curt, their accent and tone of speech blunt and harsh. Something of this may, probably, be attributed to the freedom of mountain air and of isolated hillside life; something be derived from their rough Norse ancestry. They have a quick perception of character, and a keen sense of humour; the dwellers among them must be prepared for certain uncomplimentary, though most likely true, observations, pithily expressed. Their feelings are not easily roused, but their duration is lasting. Hence there is much close friendship and faithful service; and for a correct exemplification of the form in which the latter frequently appears, I need only refer the reader of 'Wuthering Heights' to the character of 'Joseph.'

From the same cause come also enduring grudges, in some cases amounting to hatred, which occasionally has been bequeathed from generation to generation. I remember Miss Brontë once telling me that it was a saying round about Haworth, 'Keep a stone in thy pocket seven year; turn it, and keep it seven year longer, that it may be ever ready to thine hand when thine enemy draws near.'

The West Riding men are sleuth-hounds in pursuit of money. Miss Brontë related to my husband[1] a curious

[1] William Gaskell (1805–1884). Mr. Gaskell was a Unitarian minister. He was the son of a manufacturer, and was born at Latch-

instance illustrative of this eager desire for riches. A man that she knew, who was a small manufacturer, had engaged in many local speculations which had always turned out well, and thereby rendered him a person of some wealth. He was rather past middle age, when he bethought him of insuring his life; and he had only just taken out his policy when he fell ill of an acute disease which was certain to end fatally in a very few days. The doctor, half hesitatingly, revealed to him his hopeless state. 'By jingo!' cried he, rousing up at once into the old energy, 'I shall *do* the insurance company! I always was a lucky fellow!'

These men are keen and shrewd; faithful and persevering in following out a good purpose, fell in tracking an evil one. They are not emotional: they are not easily made into either friends or enemies; but once lovers or haters, it is difficult to change their feeling. They are a powerful race both in mind and body, both for good and for evil.

The woollen manufacture was introduced into this district in the days of Edward III. It is traditionally said that a colony of Flemings came over and settled in the West Riding to teach the inhabitants what to do with their wool. The mixture of agricultural with manufacturing labour that ensued and prevailed in the West Riding up to a very recent period, sounds pleasant enough at this distance of time, when the classical impression is left, and the details forgotten, or

ford, near Warrington. He studied at Glasgow, where he graduated M.A. in 1824. After a period as divinity student at Manchester College, York, he became minister of Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, in 1828, and this position he occupied until his retirement. He was professor of English history and literature at Manchester New College from 1846 to 1853, and he held many other appointments from time to time. Although perhaps best known to the world as the husband of the novelist, he himself wrote a considerable number of hymns, sermons, and controversial pamphlets. He died at his residence, Plymouth Grove, Manchester, June 11, 1884, and was buried beside his wife (who had died in 1865) at Knutsford. (The Rev. Alexander Gordon, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.)

only brought to light by those who explore the few remote parts of England where the custom still lingers. The idea of the mistress and her maidens spinning at the great wheels while the master was abroad ploughing his fields, or seeing after his flocks on the purple moors, is very poetical to look back upon; but when such life actually touches on our own days, and we can hear particulars from the lips of those now living, there come out details of coarseness—of the uncouthness of the rustic mingled with the sharpness of the tradesman—of irregularity and fierce lawlessness—that rather mar the vision of pastoral innocence and simplicity. Still, as it is the exceptional and exaggerated characteristics of any period that leave the most vivid memory behind them, it would be wrong, and in my opinion faithless, to conclude that such and such forms of society and modes of living were not best for the period when they prevailed, although the abuses they may have led into, and the gradual progress of the world, have made it well that such ways and manners should pass away for ever, and as preposterous to attempt to return to them as it would be for a man to return to the clothes of his childhood.

The patent granted to Alderman Cockayne, and the further restrictions imposed by James I. on the export of undyed woollen cloths (met by a prohibition on the part of the States of Holland of the import of English-dyed cloths), injured the trade of the West Riding manufacturers considerably. Their independence of character, their dislike of authority, and their strong powers of thought predisposed them to rebellion against the religious dictation of such men as Laud and the arbitrary rule of the Stuarts; and the injury done by James and Charles to the trade by which they gained their bread made the great majority of them Commonwealth men. I shall have occasion afterwards to give one or two instances of the warm feelings and extensive knowledge on subjects of both home and foreign politics existing at the present day in the villages lying west and east of the mountainous ridge that separates Yorkshire and Lancashire, the

inhabitants of which are of the same race and possess the same quality of character.

The descendants of many who served under Cromwell at Dunbar live on the same lands as their ancestors occupied then; and perhaps there is no part of England where the traditional and fond recollections of the Commonwealth have lingered so long as in that inhabited by the woollen manufacturing population of the West Riding, who had the restrictions taken off their trade by the Protector's admirable commercial policy. I have it on good authority that, not thirty years ago, the phrase 'in Oliver's days' was in common use to denote a time of unusual prosperity. The class of Christian names prevalent in a district is one indication of the direction in which its tide of hero-worship sets. Grave enthusiasts in politics or religion perceive not the ludicrous side of those which they give to their children; and some are to be found, still in their infancy, not a dozen miles from Haworth, that will have to go through life as Lamartine, Kossuth, and Dembinsky. And so there is a testimony to what I have said, of the traditional feeling of the district, and in fact that the Old Testament names in general use among the Puritans are yet the prevalent appellations in most Yorkshire families of middle or humble rank, whatever their religious persuasion may be. There are numerous records, too, that show the kindly way in which the ejected ministers were received by the gentry, as well as by the poorer part of the inhabitants, during the persecuting days of Charles II. These little facts all testify to the old hereditary spirit of independence, ready ever to resist authority which was conceived to be unjustly exercised, that distinguishes the people of the West Riding to the present day.

The parish of Halifax touches that of Bradford, in which the chapelry of Haworth is included; and the nature of the ground in the two parishes is much of the same wild and hilly description. The abundance of coal, and the number of mountain streams in the district, make it highly favourable to manufactures; and accordingly, as I stated, the inhabit-

ants have for centuries been engaged in making cloth, as well as in agricultural pursuits. But the intercourse of trade failed, for a long time, to bring amenity and civilisation into these outlying hamlets, or widely scattered dwellings. Mr. Hunter, in his 'Life of Oliver Heywood,'[1] quotes a sentence out of a memorial of one James Rither, living in the reign of Elizabeth, which is partially true to this day :—

'They have no superior to court, no civilities to practise: a sour and sturdy humour is the consequence, so that a stranger is shocked by a tone of defiance in every voice, and an air of fierceness in every countenance.'

Even now a stranger can hardly ask a question without receiving some crusty reply, if, indeed, he receives any at all. Sometimes the sour rudeness amounts to positive insult. Yet if the 'foreigner' takes all this churlishness good-humouredly, or as a matter of course, and makes good any claim upon their latent kindliness and hospitality, they are faithful and generous, and thoroughly to be relied upon. As a slight illustration of the roughness that pervades all classes in these out-of-the-way villages, I may relate a little adventure which happened to my husband and myself, three years ago, at Addingham—

'From Penigent to Pendle Hill,
From Linton to Long-*Addingham*
And all that Craven coasts did till,' &c.—

one of the places that sent forth its fighting men to the famous old battle of Flodden Field, and a village not many miles from Haworth.

[1] Oliver Heywood (1630–1702), Nonconformist divine, third son of Richard Heywood, yeoman, by his first wife, Alice Critchlaw, was born at Little Lever, near Bolton, Lancashire. His parents were Puritans. He was educated at Bolton Grammar School and Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1650 he became preacher at Coley Chapel, in the village of Northowram, in the parish of Halifax, West Riding, at a salary of 30*l.* a year. Oliver Heywood was a Royalist Presbyterian. The London Agreement of 1691 between the Presbyterians and Congregationalists, known as the 'Happy Union,' was introduced mainly through his influence.

We were driving along the street, when one of those ne'er-do-weel lads who seem to have a kind of magnetic power for misfortunes, having jumped into the stream that runs through the place, just where all the broken glass and bottles are thrown, staggered naked and nearly covered with blood into a cottage before us. Besides receiving another bad cut in the arm, he had completely laid open the artery, and was in a fair way of bleeding to death—which, one of his relations comforted him by saying, would be likely to 'save a deal o' trouble.'

When my husband had checked the effusion of blood with a strap that one of the bystanders unbuckled from his leg, he asked if a surgeon had been sent for.

'Yoi,' was the answer; 'but we dinna think he'll come.'

'Why not?'

'He's owd, yo seen, and asthmatic, and it's up-hill.'

My husband, taking a boy for his guide, drove as fast as he could to the surgeon's house, which was about three-quarters of a mile off, and met the aunt of the wounded lad leaving it.

'Is he coming?' inquired my husband.

'Well, he didna' say he wouldna' come.'

'But tell him the lad may bleed to death.'

'I did.'

'And what did he say?'

'Why, only "D——n him; what do I care?"'

It ended, however, in his sending one of his sons, who, though not brought up to 'the surgering trade,' was able to do what was necessary in the way of bandages and plasters. The excuse made for the surgeon was that 'he was near eighty, and getting a bit doited, and had had a matter o' twenty childer.'

Among the most unmoved of the lookers-on was the brother of the boy so badly hurt; and while he was lying in a pool of blood on the flag floor, and crying out how much his arm was 'warching,' his stoical relation stood coolly

smoking his bit of black pipe, and uttered not a single word of either sympathy or sorrow.

Forest customs, existing in the fringes of dark wood which clothed the declivity of the hills on either side, tended to brutalise the population until the middle of the seventeenth century. Execution by beheading was performed in a summary way upon either men or women who were guilty of but very slight crimes; and a dogged, yet in some cases fine, indifference to human life was thus generated. The roads were so notoriously bad, even up to the last thirty years, that there was little communication between one village and another; if the produce of industry could be conveyed at stated times to the cloth market of the district, it was all that could be done; and, in lonely houses on the distant hillside, or by the small magnates of secluded hamlets, crimes might be committed almost unknown, certainly without any great uprising of popular indignation calculated to bring down the strong arm of the law. It must be remembered that in those days there was no rural constabulary; and the few magistrates left to themselves, and generally related to one another, were most of them inclined to tolerate eccentricity, and to wink at faults too much like their own.

Men hardly past middle life talk of the days of their youth, spent in this part of the country, when, during the winter months, they rode up to the saddle girths in mud; when absolute business was the only reason for stirring beyond the precincts of home; and when that business was conducted under a pressure of difficulties which they themselves, borne along to Bradford market in a swift first-class carriage, can hardly believe to have been possible. For instance, one woollen manufacturer says that, not five-and-twenty years ago, he had to rise betimes to set off on a winter's morning in order to be at Bradford with the great wagon-load of goods manufactured by his father; this load was packed over-night, but in the morning there was a great gathering around it, and flashing of lanterns, and examina-

tion of horses' feet, before the ponderous wagon got under way; and then some one had to go groping here and there, on hands and knees, and always sounding with a staff down the long, steep, slippery brow, to find where the horses might tread safely, until they reached the comparative easy-going of the deep-rutted main road. People went on horse-back over the upland moors, following the tracks of the pack-horses that carried the parcels, baggage, or goods from one town to another between which there did not happen to be a highway.

But in winter all such communication was impossible, by reason of the snow which lay long and late on the bleak high ground. I have known people who, travelling by the mail coach over Blackstone Edge, had been snowed up for a week or ten days at the little inn near the summit, and obliged to spend both Christmas and New Year's Day there, till, the store of provisions laid in for the use of the landlord and his family falling short before the inroads of the unexpected visitors, they had recourse to the turkeys, geese, and Yorkshire pies with which the coach was laden; and even these were beginning to fail, when a fortunate thaw released them from their prison.

Isolated as the hill villages may be, they are in the world, compared with the loneliness of the grey ancestral houses to be seen here and there in the dense hollows of the moors. These dwellings are not large, yet they are solid and roomy enough for the accommodation of those who live in them, and to whom the surrounding estates belong. The land has often been held by one family since the days of the Tudors; the owners are, in fact, the remains of the old yeomanry—small squires—who are rapidly becoming extinct as a class, from one of two causes. Either the possessor falls into idle, drinking habits, and so is obliged eventually to sell his property: or he finds, if more shrewd and adventurous, that the 'beck' running down the mountain-side, or the minerals beneath his feet, can be turned into a new source of wealth; and leaving the old plodding life of a landowner with small

capital, he turns manufacturer, or digs for coal, or quarries for stone.

Still there are those remaining of this class—dwellers in the lonely houses far away in the upland districts—even at the present day, who sufficiently indicate what strange eccentricity—what wild strength of will—nay, even what unnatural power of crime was fostered by a mode of living in which a man seldom met his fellows and where public opinion was only a distant and inarticulate echo of some clearer voice sounding behind the sweeping horizon.

A solitary life cherishes mere fancies until they become manias. And the powerful Yorkshire character, which was scarcely tamed into subjection by all the contact it met with in 'busy town or crowded mart,' has before now broken out into strange wilfulness in the remoter districts. A singular account was recently given me of a landowner (living, it is true, on the Lancashire side of the hills, but of the same blood and nature as the dwellers on the other) who was supposed to be in receipt of seven or eight hundred a year, and whose house bore marks of handsome antiquity, as if his forefathers had been for a long time people of consideration. My informant was struck with the appearance of the place, and proposed to the countryman who was accompanying him to go up to it and take a nearer inspection. The reply was, 'Yo'd better not; he'd threap yo' down th' loan. He's let fly at some folks' legs, and let shot lodge in 'em afore now, for going too near to his house.' And finding, on closer inquiry, that such was really the inhospitable custom of this moorland squire, the gentleman gave up his purpose. I believe that the savage yeoman is still living.

Another squire, of more distinguished family and larger property—one is thence led to imagine of better education, but that does not always follow—died at his house, not many miles from Haworth, only a few years ago. His great amusement and occupation had been cock-fighting. When he was confined to his chamber with what he knew would be his last illness, he had his cocks brought up there, and

watched the bloody battle from his bed. As his mortal disease increased, and it became impossible for him to turn so as to follow the combat, he had looking-glasses arranged in such a manner, around and above him, as he lay, that he could still see the cocks fighting. And in this manner he died.

These are merely instances of eccentricity compared with the tales of positive violence and crime that have occurred in these isolated dwellings, which still linger in the memories of the old people of the district, and some of which were doubtless familiar to the authors of 'Wuthering Heights' and 'The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.'

The amusements of the lower classes could hardly be expected to be more humane than those of the wealthy and better educated. The gentleman who has kindly furnished me with some of the particulars I have given remembers the bull-baitings at Rochdale, not thirty years ago. The bull was fastened by a chain or rope to a post in the river. To increase the amount of water, as well as to give their workpeople the opportunity of savage delight, the masters were accustomed to stop their mills on the day when the sport took place. The bull would sometimes wheel suddenly round, so that the rope by which he was fastened swept those who had been careless enough to come within its range down into the water, and the good people of Rochdale had the excitement of seeing one or two of their neighbours drowned, as well as of witnessing the bull baited, and the dogs torn and tossed.

The people of Haworth were not less strong and full of character than their neighbours on either side of the hills. The village lies embedded in the moors, between the two counties, on the old road between Keighley and Colne. About the middle of the last century it became famous in the religious world as the scene of the ministrations of the Rev. William Grimshaw,[1] curate of Haworth for twenty years.

[1] William Grimshaw (1708–1763) was born at Brindle, Lancashire. He was educated at the grammar schools of Blackburn and Hesketh, and at

Before this time it is probable that the curates were of the same order as one Mr. Nicholls, a Yorkshire clergyman, in the days immediately succeeding the Reformation, who was 'much addicted to drinking and company-keeping,' and used to say to his companions, 'You must not heed me but when I am got three feet above the earth,' that was, into the pulpit.

Mr. Grimshaw's life was written by Newton,[1] Cowper's friend; and from it may be gathered some curious particulars of the manner in which a rough population were swayed and governed by a man of deep convictions and strong earnestness of purpose. It seems that he had not been in any way remarkable for religious zeal, though he had led a moral life, and been conscientious in fulfilling his parochial duties, until a certain Sunday in September 1744, when the servant, rising at five, found her master already engaged in prayer. She stated that, after remaining in his chamber for some time, he went to engage in religious exercises in the house of a parishioner, then home again to pray; thence, still fasting, to the church, where, as he was reading the second lesson, he fell down, and, on his partial recovery, had to be led from the church. As he went out he spoke to the congregation, and told them not to disperse, as he had something to say to them, and would return presently. He was taken to the clerk's house, and again became insensible. His servant

Christ's College, Cambridge. Grimshaw became curate of Rochdale in 1731 and removed to Todmorden the same year. He was appointed to the perpetual curacy of Haworth in 1742, and there he encouraged the Methodist revival to such an extent that the Wesleys and Whitefield occupied his pulpit. He spent many years in energetic work, associating, to the scandal of some of his clerical brethren, with every phase of Nonconformist effort, and he assisted to build a Methodist chapel at Haworth. He died at Haworth and was buried in Luddenden Church in the neighbourhood. His published works consisted of four religious pamphlets. (The Rev. Canon Overton, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.)

[1] John Newton (1725–1807). After being engaged for some years in the African slave trade he became in 1764 curate of Olney, and in 1779 rector of St. Mary Woolnoth, London.

rubbed him, to restore the circulation; and when he was brought to himself 'he seemed in a great rapture,' and the first words he uttered were, 'I have had a glorious vision from the third heaven.' He did not say what he had seen, but returned into the church, and began the service again, at two in the afternoon, and went on until seven.

From this time he devoted himself, with the fervour of a Wesley, and something of the fanaticism of a Whitefield, to calling out a religious life among his parishioners. They had been in the habit of playing at football on Sunday, using stones for this purpose; and giving and receiving challenges from other parishes. There were horse races held on the moors just above the village, which were periodical sources of drunkenness and profligacy. Scarcely a wedding took place without the rough amusement of foot races, where the half-naked runners were a scandal to all decent strangers. The old custom of 'arvills,' or funeral feasts, led to frequent pitched battles between the drunken mourners. Such customs were the outward signs of the kind of people with whom Mr. Grimshaw had to deal. But, by various means, some of the most practical kind, he wrought a great change in his parish. In his preaching he was occasionally assisted by Wesley and Whitefield, and at such times the little church proved much too small to hold the throng that poured in from distant villages or lonely moorland hamlets; and frequently they were obliged to meet in the open air: indeed, there was not room enough in the church even for the communicants. Mr. Whitefield [1] was once preaching in Haworth, and made use of some such expression as that he hoped there was no need to say much to this congregation, as they had sat under so pious and godly a minister for so

[1] George Whitefield (1714–1770). Born at Gloucester; he became a servitor at Pembroke College, Oxford. Took deacon's orders in 1736, and preached in Gloucester Cathedral. Joined Wesley in Georgia in 1738, and became associated with him in revivalist work. Separated from Wesley on the question of predestination in 1741. He died near Boston, Massachusetts, when on a preaching tour in America.

many years; 'whereupon Mr. Grimshaw stood up in his place, and said with a loud voice, "Oh, sir! for God's sake do not speak so. I pray you do not flatter them. I fear the greater part of them are going to hell with their eyes open."' But if they were so bound it was not for want of exertion on Mr. Grimshaw's part to prevent them. He used to preach twenty or thirty times a week in private houses. If he perceived any one inattentive to his prayers, he would stop and rebuke the offender, and not go on till he saw every one on their knees. He was very earnest in enforcing the strict observance of Sunday, and would not even allow his parishioners to walk in the fields between services. He sometimes gave out a very long psalm (tradition says the 119th), and while it was being sung he left the reading-desk, and taking a horsewhip went into the public-houses, and flogged the loiterers into church. They were swift who could escape the lash of the parson by sneaking out the back way. He had strong health and an active body, and rode far and wide over the hills, 'awakening' those who had previously had no sense of religion. To save time, and be no charge to the families at whose houses he held his prayer-meetings, he carried his provisions with him; all the food he took in the day on such occasions consisting simply of a piece of bread-and-butter, or dry bread and a raw onion.

The horse races were justly objectionable to Mr. Grimshaw; they attracted numbers of profligate people to Haworth, and brought a match to the combustible materials of the place, only too ready to blaze out into wickedness. The story is that he tried all means of persuasion, and even intimidation, to have the races discontinued, but in vain. At length, in despair, he prayed with such fervour of earnestness that the rain came down in torrents, and deluged the ground, so that there was no footing for man or beast, even if the multitude had been willing to stand such a flood let down from above. And so Haworth races were stopped, and have never been resumed to this day. Even

now the memory of this good man is held in reverence, and his faithful ministrations and real virtues are one of the boasts of the parish.

But after his time I fear there was a falling back into the wild, rough, heathen ways, from which he had pulled them up, as it were, by the passionate force of his individual character. He had built a chapel for the Wesleyan Methodists, and not very long after the Baptists established themselves in a place of worship. Indeed, as Dr. Whitaker says, the people of this district are 'strong religionists;' only, fifty years ago their religion did not work down into their lives. Half that length of time back the code of morals seemed to be formed upon that of their Norse ancestors.[1] Revenge was handed down from father to son as an hereditary duty; and a great capability for drinking without the head being affected was considered as one of the manly virtues. The games of football on Sundays, with the challenges to the neighbouring parishes, were resumed, bringing in an influx of riotous strangers to fill the public-houses, and make the more sober-minded inhabitants long for good Mr. Grimshaw's stout arm and ready horsewhip. The old custom of 'arvills' was as prevalent as ever. The sexton, standing at the foot of the open grave, announced that the 'arvill' would be held at the 'Black Bull,' or whatever public-house might be fixed upon by the friends of the dead; and thither their mourners and their acquaintances repaired. The origin of the custom had been the necessity of furnishing some refreshment for those who came from a distance to pay the last mark of respect to a friend. In the 'Life of Oliver Heywood' there are two quotations which show what sort of food was provided for 'arvills' in quiet Nonconformist connections in the seventeenth century; the first (from Thoresby) tells of 'cold possets, stewed prunes,

[1] This suggestion of Norse ancestry has been called in question by the inhabitants of the Haworth district. They claim to be purely of Saxon origin, the Danish and Norwegian settlers never having come as far west as Haworth.

cake, and cheese' as being the arvill after Oliver Heywood's funeral. The second gives, as rather shabby, according to the notion of the times (1673), 'nothing but a bit of cake, a draught of wine, a piece of rosemary, and a pair of gloves.'

But the arvills at Haworth were often far more jovial doings. Among the poor the mourners were only expected to provide a kind of spiced roll for each person; and the expense of the liquors—rum, or ale, or a mixture of both called 'dog's nose'—was generally defrayed by each guest placing some money on a plate, set in the middle of the table. Richer people would order a dinner for their friends. At the funeral of Mr. Charnock (the next successor but one to Mr. Grimshaw in the incumbency) above eighty people were bid to the arvill, and the price of the feast was 4*s.* 6*d.* per head, all of which was defrayed by the friends of the deceased. As few 'shirked their liquor,' there were very frequently 'up-and-down fights' before the close of the day; sometimes with the horrid additions of 'pawsing,' and 'gouging,' and biting.

Although I have dwelt on the exceptional traits in the characteristics of these stalwart West-Ridingers, such as they were in the first quarter of this century, if not a few years later, I have little doubt that in the everyday life of the people so independent, wilful, and full of grim humour, there would be much found even at present that would shock those accustomed only to the local manners of the south; and, in return, I suspect the shrewd, sagacious, energetic Yorkshireman would hold such 'foreigners' in no small contempt.

I have said it is most probable that where Haworth Church now stands there was once an ancient 'field kirk, or oratory. It occupied the third or lowest class of ecclesiastical structures, according to the Saxon law, and had no right of sepulture, or administration of sacraments. It was so called because it was built without enclosure, and open to the adjoining fields or moors. The founder, according to the laws of Edgar, was bound, without subtracting from his tithes, to maintain the ministering priest out of the remaining nine parts of his income. After the Reformation the

right of choosing their clergyman, at any of those chapels of ease which had formerly been field kirks, was vested in the freeholders and trustees, subject to the approval of the vicar of the parish. But, owing to some negligence, this right has been lost to the freeholders and trustees at Haworth ever since the days of Archbishop Sharp; and the power of choosing a minister has lapsed into the hands of the Vicar of Bradford. So runs the account, according to one authority.

Mr. Brontë says, 'This living has for its patrons the Vicar of Bradford and certain trustees. My predecessor took the living with the consent of the Vicar of Bradford, but in opposition to the trustees; in consequence of which he was so opposed that, after only three weeks' possession, he was compelled to resign.' A Yorkshire gentleman, who has kindly sent me some additional information on this subject since the second edition of my work was published, writes thus:—

'The sole right of presentation to the incumbency of Haworth is vested in the Vicar of Bradford. He only can present. The funds, however, from which the clergyman's stipend mainly proceeds are vested in the hands of trustees, who have the power to withhold them, if a nominee is sent of whom they disapprove. On the decease of Mr. Charnock, the Vicar first tendered the preferment to Mr. Brontë, and he went over to his expected cure. He was told that towards himself they had no personal objection, but as a nominee of the Vicar he would not be received. He therefore retired, with the declaration that if he could not come with the approval of the parish, his ministry could not be useful. Upon this the attempt was made to introduce Mr. Redhead.

'When Mr. Redhead was repelled a fresh difficulty arose. Some one must first move towards a settlement, but a spirit being evoked which could not be allayed, action became perplexing. The matter had to be referred to some independent arbitrator, and my father was the gentleman to

whom each party turned its eye. A meeting was convened, and the business settled by the Vicar's conceding the choice to the trustees, and the acceptance of the Vicar's presentation. That choice forthwith fell on Mr. Brontë, whose promptness and prudence had won their hearts.'

In conversing on the character of the inhabitants of the West Riding with Dr. Scoresby, who had been for some time Vicar of Bradford, he alluded to certain riotous transactions which had taken place at Haworth on the presentation of the living to Mr. Redhead, and said that there had been so much in the particulars indicative of the character of the people, that he advised me to inquire into them. I have accordingly done so, and, from the lips of some of the survivors among the actors and spectators, I have learnt the means taken to eject the nominee of the Vicar.

The previous incumbent had been the Mr. Charnock whom I mentioned as next but one in succession to Mr. Grimshaw. He had a long illness which rendered him unable to discharge his duties without assistance, and Mr. Redhead gave him occasional help, to the great satisfaction of the parishioners, and was highly respected by them during Mr. Charnock's lifetime. But the case was entirely altered when, at Mr. Charnock's death in 1819, they conceived that the trustees had been unjustly deprived of their rights by the Vicar of Bradford, who appointed Mr. Redhead as perpetual curate.

The first Sunday he officiated Haworth Church was filled even to the aisles, most of the people wearing the wooden clogs of the district. But while Mr. Redhead was reading the second lesson the whole congregation, as by one impulse, began to leave the church, making all the noise they could with clattering and clumping of clogs, till, at length, Mr. Redhead and the clerk were the only two left to continue the service. This was bad enough, but the next Sunday the proceedings were far worse. Then, as before, the church was well filled, but the aisles were left clear ; not a creature, not an obstacle was in the way. The reason for

this was made evident about the same time in the reading of the service as the disturbances had begun the previous week. A man rode into the church upon an ass, with his face turned towards the tail, and as many old hats piled on his head as he could possibly carry. He began urging his beast round the aisles, and the screams, and cries, and laughter of the congregation entirely drowned all sound of Mr. Redhead's voice, and, I believe, he was obliged to desist.

Hitherto they had not proceeded to anything like personal violence; but on the third Sunday they must have been greatly irritated at seeing Mr. Redhead, determined to brave their will, ride up the village street, accompanied by several gentlemen from Bradford. They put up their horses at the 'Black Bull'—the little inn close upon the churchyard, for the convenience of arvills as well as for other purposes—and went into church. On this the people followed, with a chimney-sweeper, whom they had employed to clean the chimneys of some out-buildings belonging to the church that very morning, and afterward plied with drink till he was in a state of solemn intoxication. They placed him right before the reading-desk, where his blackened face nodded a drunken, stupid assent to all that Mr. Redhead said. At last, either prompted by some mischief-maker or from some tipsy impulse, he clambered up the pulpit stairs, and attempted to embrace Mr. Redhead. Then the profane fun grew fast and furious. Some of the more riotous pushed the soot-covered chimney-sweeper against Mr. Redhead, as he tried to escape. They threw both him and his tormentor down on the ground in the churchyard where the soot-bag had been emptied, and though, at last, Mr. Redhead escaped into the 'Black Bull,' the doors of which were immediately barred, the people raged without, threatening to stone him and his friends. One of my informants is an old man, who was the landlord of the inn at the time, and he stands to it that such was the temper of the irritated mob that Mr. Redhead was in real danger of his life. This man, however, planned an escape

for his unpopular inmates. The 'Black Bull' is near the top of the long, steep Haworth street, and at the bottom, close by the bridge, on the road to Keighley, is a turnpike. Giving directions to his hunted guests to steal out at the back door (through which, probably, many a ne'er-do-weel has escaped from good Mr. Grimshaw's horsewhip), the landlord and some of the stable boys rode the horses belonging to the party from Bradford backwards and forwards before his front door, among the fiercely expectant crowd. Through some opening between the houses those on the horses saw Mr. Redhead and his friends creeping along behind the street; and then, striking spurs, they dashed quickly down to the turnpike; the obnoxious clergyman and his friends mounted in haste, and had sped some distance before the people found out that their prey had escaped, and came running to the closed turnpike gate.[1]

This was Mr. Redhead's last appearance at Haworth for many years. Long afterwards he came to preach, and in his sermon to a large and attentive congregation he good-humouredly reminded them of the circumstances which I have described. They gave him a hearty welcome, for they owed him no grudge; although before they had been ready enough to stone him, in order to maintain what they considered to be their rights.

The foregoing account, which I heard from two of the survivors, in the presence of a friend who can vouch for the accuracy of my repetition, has to a certain degree been confirmed by a letter from the Yorkshire gentleman whose words I have already quoted.

'I am not surprised at your difficulty in authenticating matter of fact. I find this in recalling what I have heard, and the authority on which I have heard anything. As to

[1] Mr. Redhead's son-in-law wrote to Mrs. Gaskell remonstrating with her concerning these pages, and indeed denying this account of his father-in-law's Haworth associations, but giving another as true, 'in which,' writes Mrs. Gaskell to a friend, 'I don't see any great difference.'

HAWORTH VILLAGE—MAIN STREET.

the donkey tale, I believe you are right. Mr. Redhead and Dr. Ramsbotham, his son-in-law, are no strangers to me. Each of them has a niche in my affections.

'I have asked, this day, two persons who lived in Haworth at the time to which you allude, the son and daughter of an acting trustee, and each of them between sixty and seventy years of age, and they assure me that the donkey was introduced. One of them says it was mounted by a half-witted man, seated with his face towards the tail of the beast, and having several hats piled on his head. Neither of my informants was, however, present at these edifying services. I believe that no movement was made in the church on either Sunday until the whole of the authorised reading-service was gone through, and I am sure that nothing was more remote from the more respectable party than any personal antagonism towards Mr. Redhead. He was one of the most amiable and worthy of men, a man to myself endeared by many ties and obligations. I never heard before your book that the sweep ascended the pulpit steps. He was present, however, in the clerical habiliments of his order. . . . I may also add that among the many who were present at those sad Sunday orgies the majority were non-residents, and came from those moorland fastnesses on the outskirts of the parish locally designated as "ovver th' steyres," one stage more remote than Haworth from modern civilisation.

'To an instance or two more of the rusticity of the inhabitants of the chapelry of Haworth I may introduce you.

'A Haworth carrier called at the office of a friend of mine to deliver a parcel on a cold winter's day, and stood with the door open. "Robin! shut the door!" said the recipient. "Have you no doors in your country?" "Yoi," responded Robin, "we hev, but we nivver steik 'em." I have frequently remarked the number of doors open even in winter.

'When well directed, the indomitable and independent

energies of the natives of this part of the country are invaluable; dangerous when perverted. I shall never forget the fierce actions and utterances of one suffering from delirium tremens. Whether in its wrath, disdain, or its dismay, the countenance was infernal. I called once upon a time on a most respectable yeoman, and I was, in language earnest and homely, pressed to accept the hospitality of the house. I consented. The word to me was, "Nah, maister, yah mun stop an' hev sum te-ah, yah mun, eah, yah mun." A bountiful table was soon spread; at all events time soon went while I scaled the hills to see "t' maire at wor thretty year owd, an' t' foil at wor fower." On sitting down to the table, a venerable woman officiated, and after filling the cups she thus addressed me: "Nah, maister, yah mun loawze th' taible" (loose the table). The master said, "Shah meeans yah mun sey t' greyce." I took the hint and uttered the blessing.

'I spoke with an aged and tried woman at one time, who, after recording her mercies, stated, among others, her powers of speech, by asserting, "Thank the Lord, ah nivver wor a meilly-meouthed wumman." I feel particularly at fault in attempting the orthography of the dialect, but must excuse myself by telling you that I once saw a letter in which the word I have just now used (excuse) was written "ecksqueaize"!

'There are some things, however, which rather tend to soften the idea of the rudeness of Haworth. No rural district has been more markedly the abode of musical taste and acquirement, and this at a period when it was difficult to find them to the same extent apart from towns in advance of their times. I have gone to Haworth and found an orchestra to meet me, filled with local performers, vocal and instrumental, to whom the best works of Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Marcello, &c. &c., were familiar as household words. By knowledge, taste, and voice they were markedly separate from ordinary village choirs, and have been put in extensive requisition for the solo and chorus of many an imposing

festival. One man [1] still survives, who, for fifty years, has had one of the finest tenor voices I ever heard, and with it a refined and cultivated taste. To him and to others many inducements have been offered to migrate; but the loom, the association, the mountain air have had charms enow to secure their continuance at home. I love the recollection of their performance; the recollection extends over more than sixty years. The attachments, the antipathies, and the hospitalities of the district are ardent, hearty, and homely. Cordiality in each is the prominent characteristic. As a people, these mountaineers have ever been accessible to gentleness and truth, so far as I have known them; but excite suspicion or resentment, and they give emphatic and not impotent resistance. Compulsion they defy.

'I accompanied Mr. Heap on his first visit to Haworth after his accession to the vicarage of Bradford. It was on Easter Day, either 1816 or 1817. His predecessor, the venerable John Crosse, known as the "blind vicar," had been inattentive to the vicarial claims. A searching investigation had to be made and enforced, and as it proceeded stout and sturdy utterances were not lacking on the part of the parishioners. To a spectator, though rude, they were amusing, and significant, foretelling what might be expected, and what was afterwards realised, on the advent of a new incumbent, if they deemed him an intruder.

'From their peculiar parochial position and circumstances, the inhabitants of the chapelry have been prompt, earnest, and persevering in their opposition to church rates. Although ten miles from the mother church, they were called upon to defray a large proportion of this obnoxious tax—I believe one-fifth.

'Besides this they had to maintain their own edifice, &c. &c. They resisted, therefore, with energy, that which they deemed to be oppression and injustice. By scores would

[1] This 'one man' was Thomas Parker (1787–1866), 'the Yorkshire Braham,' who was buried at Oxenhope, near Haworth.

they wend their way from the hills to attend a vestry meeting at Bradford, and in such service failed not to show less of the *suaviter in modo* than the *fortiter in re*. Happily such occasion for their action has not occurred for many years.

'The use of patronymics has been common in this locality. Inquire for a man by his Christian name and surname, and you may have some difficulty in finding him: ask, however, for "George o' Ned's," or "Dick o' Bob's," or "Tom o' Jack's," as the case may be, and your difficulty is at an end. In many instances the person is designated by his residence. In my early years I had occasion to inquire for Jonathan Whitaker, who owned a considerable farm in the township. I was sent hither and thither, until it occurred to me to ask for "Jonathan o' th' Gate." My difficulties were then at an end. Such circumstances arise out of the settled character and isolation of the natives.

'Those who have witnessed a Haworth wedding, when the parties were above the rank of labourers, will not easily forget the scene. A levy was made on the horses of the neighbourhood, and a merry cavalcade of mounted men and women, single or double, traversed the way to Bradford Church. The inn and church appeared to be in natural connection, and, as the labours of the Temperance Society had then to begin, the interests of sobriety were not always consulted. On remounting their steeds they commenced with a race, and not unfrequently an inebriate or unskilful horseman or woman was put *hors de combat*. A race also was frequent at the end of these wedding expeditions, from the bridge to the toll-bar at Haworth. The racecourse you will know to be anything but level.'

Into the midst of this lawless yet not unkindly population Mr. Brontë brought his wife and six little children, in February 1820. There are those yet alive who remember seven heavily laden carts lumbering slowly up the long stone street, bearing the 'new parson's' household goods to his future abode.

One wonders how the bleak aspect of her new home—the low oblong stone parsonage, high up, yet with a still higher background of sweeping moors—struck on the gentle, delicate wife, whose health even then was failing.

CHAPTER III

The Rev. Patrick Brontë is a native of the County Down in Ireland.[1] His father, Hugh Brontë, was left an orphan at an early age. He came from the south to the north of the island, and settled in the parish of Ahaderg, near Loughbrickland. There was some family tradition that, humble as Hugh Brontë's[2] circumstances were, he was the descendant of an ancient family. But about this neither he nor his descendants have cared to inquire. He made an early marriage, and reared and educated ten children on the proceeds of the few acres of land which he farmed. This large family were remarkable for great physical strength and much personal beauty. Even in his old age Mr. Brontë is a striking-looking man, above the common height, with a nobly shaped head and erect carriage. In his youth he must have been unusually handsome.

He was born on Patrickmas Day (March 17) 1777, and early gave tokens of extraordinary quickness and intelligence. He had also his full share of ambition; and of his

[1] Hugh Brontë's father 'used to live in a farm on the banks of the Boyne, somewhere above Drogheda' (Dr. William Wright, *The Brontës in Ireland*). The late Dr. Wright (1837–1899) added some valuable facts to the history of the Irish Brontës, but his speculations concerning their origin and their influence on the novelists, Charlotte and Emily, were, for the most part, pure fiction.

[2] Hugh Brontë was married in 1776, in the parish church at Magherally, to Alice McClory, of Ballinasceaugh. Patrick Brontë was born in a cottage at Emdale, 'in the parish of Drumballyroney, and not in the parish of Ahaderg, or Aghaderg, as has been incorrectly stated' (Wright). The nine other children were named William, Hugh, James, Welsh, Jane, Mary, Rose, Sarah, and Alice.

strong sense and forethought there is a proof in the fact that, knowing that his father could afford him no pecuniary aid, and that he must depend upon his own exertions, he opened a public school at the early age of sixteen; and this mode of living he continued to follow for five or six years.[1] He then became a tutor in the family of the Rev. Mr. Tighe, rector of Drumgooland parish. Thence he proceeded to St. John's College, Cambridge, where he was entered in July 1802, being at the time five-and-twenty years of age. After nearly four years' residence he obtained his B.A. degree, and was ordained to a curacy in Essex, whence he removed into Yorkshire. The course of life of which this is the outline shows a powerful and remarkable character, originating and pursuing a purpose in a resolute and independent manner. Here is a youth—a boy of sixteen—separating himself from his family, and determining to maintain himself; and that not in the hereditary manner by agricultural pursuits, but by the labour of his brain.

I suppose, from what I have heard, that Mr. Tighe became strongly interested in his children's tutor, and may have aided him not only in the direction of his studies, but in the suggestion of an English University education, and in advice as to the mode in which he should obtain entrance there.[2] Mr. Brontë has now no trace of his Irish origin

[1] The statement in the text is not quite accurate. Patrick Brontë began life as a hand-loom weaver. At sixteen he was appointed teacher of Glascar School, attached to Glascar Hill Presbyterian Church, and some two years later he became master of the parish school of Drumballyroney, attached to the Episcopalian Church, of which the Rev. Thomas Tighe was rector, as also of the allied parish of Drumgooland for forty-three years.

[2] Dr. Wright suggested that it was probably with his own savings as teacher at Drumballyroney that Patrick Brontë proceeded to St. John's College, Cambridge. At Cambridge, where he was entered in October 1802, he obtained one of the Hare Exhibitions, one of the Duchess of Suffolk's Exhibitions, and the Goodman Exhibition. He took his B.A. degree in April 1806. At College he knew Henry Kirke White (1785–1806), the poet, who was a sizar at St. John's at the same time.

remaining in his speech; he never could have shown his Celtic descent in the straight Greek lines and long oval of his face; but at five-and-twenty, fresh from the only life he had ever known, to present himself at the gates of St. John's proved no little determination of will and scorn of ridicule.[1]

While at Cambridge he became one of a corps of volunteers, who were then being called out all over the country to resist the apprehended invasion by the French. I have heard him allude, in late years, to Lord Palmerston as one who had often been associated with him then in the mimic military duties which they had to perform.

We take him up now settled as a curate at Hartshead, in Yorkshire—far removed from his birthplace and all his Irish connections; with whom, indeed, he cared little to keep up any intercourse, and whom he never, I believe, revisited after becoming a student at Cambridge.[2]

Hartshead is a very small village, lying to the east of Huddersfield and Halifax; and from its high situation—on a mound, as it were, surrounded by a circular basin—commanding a magnificent view. Mr. Brontë resided here for

[1] Mr. Brontë's first curacy was at Wethersfield, in Essex, in 1806; his second was at Wellington, Salop, in 1809; his third at Dewsbury, in 1809; his fourth at Hartshead-cum-Clifton, near Huddersfield, in 1811. In 1815 he removed to Thornton, near Bradford, where his younger children Charlotte, Patrick Branwell, Emily Jane, and Anne were born, and in 1820 he became perpetual incumbent of Haworth.

[2] Patrick Brontë regularly sent money to his family in Ireland from the moment he had any to send. Some of the money obtained from his scholarship went to his mother, and Dr. Wright declares (*Brontës in Ireland*) that she always had twenty pounds a year from him. In his will Patrick Brontë says, 'I leave forty pounds to be equally divided amongst all my brothers and sisters, to whom I gave considerable sums in times past; and I direct the same sum of forty pounds to be sent for distribution to Mr. Hugh Brontë, Ballinasceaugh, near Loughbrickland, Ireland.' He certainly sent a copy of the fourth edition of *Jane Eyre* to his brother Hugh, although I doubt the suggestion which has been made that a copy of the first edition of that book was sent by Charlotte Brontë to her Irish relatives. In any case Mr. Brontë revisited Ireland at least once. Soon after his ordination he preached in Ballyroney Church.

HOUSE WHERE THE REV. PATRICK BRONTË RESIDED, AT HIGHTOWN, WHEN CURATE OF HARTSHEAD-CUM-CLIFTON.

five years; and, while the incumbent of Hartshead, he wooed and married Maria Branwell.

She was the third daughter of Mr. Thomas Branwell, merchant, of Penzance. Her mother's maiden name was Carne; and, both on father's and mother's side, the Branwell family were sufficiently well descended to enable them to mix in the best society that Penzance then afforded. Mr. and Mrs. Branwell would be living—their family of four daughters and one son, still children—during the existence of that primitive state of society which is well described by Dr. Davy in the life of his brother.[1]

'In the same town, when the population was about 2,000 persons, there was only one carpet, the floors of rooms were sprinkled with sea sand, and there was not a single silver fork.

'At that time, when our colonial possessions were very limited, our army and navy on a small scale, and there was comparatively little demand for intellect, the younger sons of gentlemen were often of necessity brought up to some trade or mechanical art, to which no discredit, or loss of caste, as it were, was attached. The eldest son, if not allowed to remain an idle country squire, was sent to Oxford or Cambridge, preparatory to his engaging in one of the three liberal professions of divinity, law, or physic; the second son was perhaps apprenticed to a surgeon or apothecary, or a solicitor; the third to a pewterer or watchmaker; the fourth to a packer or mercer, and so on, were there more to be provided for.

'After their apprenticeships were finished the young men almost invariably went to London to perfect themselves in their respective trade or art; and on their return into the country, when settled in business, they were not excluded from what would now be considered genteel society. Visiting then was conducted differently from what it is at present. Dinner parties were almost unknown, excepting at the annual feast time. Christmas, too, was then a season of

[1] Dr. John Davy's *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Humphry Davy, Bart.*, was published in 1836.

peculiar indulgence and conviviality, and a round of entertainments were given, consisting of tea and supper. Excepting at these two periods, visiting was almost entirely confined to tea parties, which assembled at three o'clock, broke up at nine, and the amusement of the evening was commonly some round game at cards, as Pope Joan, or Commerce. The lower class was then extremely ignorant, and all classes were very superstitious; even the belief in witches maintained its ground, and there was an almost unbounded credulity respecting the supernatural and monstrous. There was scarcely a parish in the Mount's Bay that was without a haunted house, or a spot to which some story of supernatural horror was not attached. Even when I was a boy, I remember a house in the best street of Penzance which was uninhabited because it was believed to be haunted, and which young people walked by at night at a quickened pace, and with a beating heart. Amongst the middle and higher classes there was little taste for literature, and still less for science, and their pursuits were rarely of a dignified or intellectual kind. Hunting, shooting, wrestling, cock-fighting, generally ending in drunkenness, were what they most delighted in. Smuggling was carried on to a great extent; and drunkenness, and a low state of morals, were naturally associated with it. Whilst smuggling was the means of acquiring wealth to bold and reckless adventurers, drunkenness and dissipation occasioned the ruin of many respectable families.'

I have given this extract because I conceive it bears some reference to the life of Miss Brontë, whose strong mind and vivid imagination must have received their first impressions either from the servants (in that simple household almost friendly companions during the greater part of the day), retailing the traditions or the news of Haworth village; or from Mr. Brontë, whose intercourse with his children appears to have been considerably restrained, and whose life, both in Ireland and at Cambridge, had been spent under peculiar circumstances; or from her aunt, Miss

Branwell, who came to the parsonage, when Charlotte was only six or seven years old, to take charge of her dead sister's family. This aunt was older than Mrs. Brontë, and had lived longer among the Penzance society, which Dr. Davy describes. But in the Branwell family itself the violence and irregularity of nature did not exist. They were Methodists, and, as far as I can gather, a gentle and sincere piety gave refinement and purity of character.[1] Mr. Branwell, the father, according to his descendants' account, was a man of musical talent. He and his wife lived to see all their children grown up, and died within a year of each other —he in 1808, she in 1809, when their daughter Maria was twenty-five or twenty-six years of age. I have been permitted to look over a series of nine letters, which were addressed by her to Mr. Brontë during the brief term of their engagement in 1812. They are full of tender grace of expression and feminine modesty; pervaded by the deep piety to which I have alluded as a family characteristic. I shall make one or two extracts from them, to show what sort of a person was the mother of Charlotte Brontë: but

[1] Investigation at Penzance will not now throw much new light on the Branwells. They are buried in a vault in the churchyard of St. Mary's, and initials only mark the last resting-place of Charlotte Brontë's maternal grandfather and grandmother. The vault is marked 'T. B. 1808,' and is near the front door of the south aisle of the church. When the vault was opened in 1897 the sexton copied the names from various coffins—'Benjamin,' 'Johanna,' 'Maria,' 'Elizabeth,' 'Jane'—and there were other Branwells there. Thomas Branwell, who is described as Assistant of the Corporation, was buried on April 8, 1808. His wife was Anne Carne, and they were married at Madron—the Mother Church of Penzance—on November 28, 1768. Mrs. Branwell was buried on December 22, 1809. Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Branwell had one son and six daughters. The name is still not uncommon in Cornwall and even in Penzance, but the last surviving relatives, two or three years ago, appeared to be a Miss Charlotte Branwell and her brother, Thomas Brontë Branwell. The former, who died in 1898, had named her house 'Shirley,' after one of the works of her remote cousin. Miss Branwell possessed some interesting miniatures of Thomas Branwell and his wife, and of Maria Brontë, and Elizabeth Branwell, the aunt of the Brontë children who died at Haworth.

first I must state the circumstances under which this Cornish lady met the scholar from Ahaderg, near Loughbrickland. In the early summer of 1812, when she would be twenty-nine, she came to visit her uncle, the Reverend John Fennell, who was at that time a clergyman of the Church of England, living near Leeds, but who had previously been a Methodist minister.[1] Mr. Brontë was the incumbent of Hartshead; and had the reputation in the neighbourhood of being a very handsome fellow, full of Irish enthusiasm, and with something of an Irishman's capability of falling easily in love. Miss Branwell was extremely small in person; not pretty, but very elegant, and always dressed with a quiet simplicity of taste, which accorded well with her general character, and of which some of the details call to mind the style of dress preferred by her daughter for her favourite heroines. Mr. Brontë was soon captivated by the little, gentle creature, and this time declared that it was for life. In her first letter to him, dated August 26, she seems almost surprised to find herself engaged, and alludes to the short time which she has known him. In the rest there are touches reminding one of Juliet's

> But trust me, gentleman; I'll prove more true
> Than those that have more cunning to be strange.

There are plans for happy picnic parties to Kirkstall Abbey, in the glowing September days, when 'Uncle, Aunt, and Cousin Jane'—the last engaged to a Mr. Morgan,[2] another clergyman—were of the party; all since dead, except Mr. Brontë. There was no opposition on the part of any of her friends to her engagement. Mr. and Mrs. Fennell sanctioned it, and her brother and sisters in far-away Pen-

[1] Mr. Fennell was at this time head-master of Woodhouse Grove Wesleyan Academy. He afterwards joined the Church of England, and was for a short time curate for the Rev. John Crosse, vicar of Bradford. He died at Cross Stones Vicarage, near Todmorden.

[2] The Rev. William Morgan (1789–1858), the first vicar of Christ Church, Bradford, and the author of several devotional works. He married Miss Fennell, the cousin of Mrs. Brontë.

zance appear fully to have approved of it. In a letter dated September 18 she says :—

'For some years I have been perfectly my own mistress, subject to no control whatever; so far from it that my sisters, who are many years older than myself, and even my dear mother, used to consult me on every occasion of importance, and scarcely ever doubted the propriety of my opinions and actions: perhaps you will be ready to accuse me of vanity in mentioning this, but you must consider that I do not boast of it. I have many times felt it a disadvantage, and although, I thank God, it had never led me into error, yet, in circumstances of uncertainty and doubt, I have deeply felt the want of a guide and instructor.' In the same letter she tells Mr. Brontë that she has informed her sisters of her engagement, and that she should not see them again so soon as she had intended. Mr. Fennell, her uncle, also writes to them by the same post in praise of Mr. Brontë.

The journey from Penzance to Leeds in those days was both very long and very expensive; the lovers had not much money to spend in unnecessary travelling, and, as Miss Branwell had neither father nor mother living, it appeared both a discreet and seemly arrangement that the marriage should take place from her uncle's house. There was no reason either why the engagement should be prolonged. They were past their first youth; they had means sufficient for their unambitious wants; the living of Hartshead is rated in the 'Clergy List' at 202*l.* per annum, and she was in the receipt of a small annuity (50*l.*, I have been told) by the will of her father. So, at the end of September, the lovers began to talk about taking a house, for I suppose that Mr. Brontë up to that time had been in lodgings; and all went smoothly and successfully with a view to their marriage in the ensuing winter, until November, when a misfortune happened, which she thus patiently and prettily describes :—

'I suppose you never expected to be much the richer for me, but I am sorry to inform you that I am still poorer than I thought myself. I mentioned having sent for my books,

clothes, &c. On Saturday evening, about the time when you were writing the description of your imaginary shipwreck, I was reading and feeling the effects of a real one, having then received a letter from my sister giving me an account of the vessel in which she had sent my box being stranded on the coast of Devonshire, in consequence of which the box was dashed to pieces with the violence of the sea, and all my little property, with the exception of a very few articles, being swallowed up in the mighty deep. If this should not prove the prelude to something worse, I shall think little of it, as it is the first disastrous circumstance which has occurred since I left my home.'

The last of these letters is dated December 5. Miss Branwell and her cousin intended to set about making the wedding cake in the following week, so the marriage could not be far off. She had been learning by heart a 'pretty little hymn' of Mr. Brontë's composing; and reading Lord Lyttelton's 'Advice to a Lady,' on which she makes some pertinent and just remarks, showing that she thought as well as read. And so Maria Branwell fades out of sight: we have no more direct intercourse with her; we hear of her as Mrs. Brontë, but it is as an invalid, not far from death; still patient, cheerful, and pious. The writing of these letters is elegant and neat; while there are allusions to household occupations—such as making the wedding cake—there are also allusions to the books she has read, or is reading, showing a well-cultivated mind. Without having anything of her daughter's rare talents, Mrs. Brontë must have been, I imagine, that unusual character a well-balanced and consistent woman. The style of the letters is easy and good, as is also that of a paper from the same hand, entitled 'The Advantages of Poverty in Religious Concerns,' which was written rather later, with a view to publication in some periodical.[1]

[1] The letters from which Mrs. Gaskell quotes the most interesting passages are printed in full in *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle*. One of them commences, 'My dear saucy Pat.' The essay, which is in my possession, consists of three sheets of quarto paper in a very neat hand-

She was married from her uncle's house in Yorkshire, on December 29, 1812 ;[1] the same day was also the wedding day of her younger sister, Charlotte Branwell, in distant Penzance. I do not think that Mrs. Brontë ever revisited Cornwall, but she has left a very pleasant impression on the minds of those relations who yet survive ; they speak of her as 'their favourite aunt, and one to whom they, as well as all the family, looked up, as a person of talent and great amiability of disposition ;' and, again, as 'meek and retiring, while possessing more than ordinary talents, which she inherited from her father ; and her piety was genuine and unobtrusive.'

Mr. Brontë remained for five years at Hartshead, in the parish of Dewsbury. There he was married, and his two children Maria and Elizabeth were born.[2] At the expiration

writing, written on both sides of the page. It is signed 'M.' On the blank page at the end Mr. Brontë has endorsed the manuscript, 'The above was written by my dear wife, and sent for insertion in one of the periodical publications. Keep it as a memorial of her.'

[1] The following announcement will be found in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1813, Vol. LXXXIII., Part I., p. 179, under *Marriages* :—

'Lately at Guiseley, near Bradford, by the Rev. W. Morgan, minister of Bierley, Rev. P. Brontë, B.A., minister of Hartshead-cum-Clifton, to Maria, third daughter of the late T. Bromwell, Esq. (*sic*), of Penzance. And at the same time, by the Rev. P. Brontë, Rev. W. Morgan to the only daughter of Mr. John Fennell, head-master of the Wesleyan Academy, near Bradford.'

[2] Here is the copy of the registration of Maria Brontë's baptism at Hartshead-cum-Clifton. Elizabeth was baptised at Thornton :—

When Baptised	Child's Christian Name	Parents' Name		Abode	Quality, Trade, or Profession	By whom the Ceremony was Performed
		Christian	Surname			
1814, April 23	Maria, daughter of	The Rev. Patrick minister of this church, and Maria, his wife	Brontë			William Morgan, officiating Minister

of that period he had the living of Thornton, in Bradford parish. Some of those great West Riding parishes are almost like bishoprics for their amount of population and number of churches. Thornton Church [1] is a little episcopal chapel of ease, rich in Nonconformist monuments, as of Accepted Lister and his friend Dr. Hall. The neighbourhood is desolate and wild; great tracts of bleak land, enclosed by stone dykes, sweeping up Clayton heights. The church itself looks ancient and solitary, and as if left behind by the great stone mills of a flourishing Independent firm, and the solid square chapel built by the members of that

[1] The Old Bell Church at Thornton, in which Mr. Brontë preached, is now a ruin. A new church exactly opposite contains the registers of the baptisms of the Brontë children, as follows.

'*Baptisms solemnised in the Parish of Bradford and Chapelry of Thornton, in the County of York.*

When Baptised	Child's Christian Name	Parents' Name		Abode	Quality, Trade, or Profession	By whom the Ceremony was Performed
		Christian	Surname			
1815, August 26	Elizabeth	Patrick and Maria	Brontë	Thornton	Minister	J. Fennell, officiating Minister
1816, June 29	Charlotte, daughter of	The Rev. Patrick and Maria	Brontë	Thornton	Minister of Thornton	Wm. Morgan, Minister of Christ Church, Bradford
1817, July 23	Patrick Branwell, son of	Patrick and Maria	Brontë	Thornton	Minister	Jno. Fennell, officiating Minister
1818, August 20	Emily Jane, daughter of	The Rev. Patrick and Maria	Brontë, A.B.	Thornton Parsonage	Minister of Thornton	Wm. Morgan, Minister of Christ Church, Bradford
1820, March 25	Anne, daughter of	The Rev. Patrick and Maria	Brontë	Minister of Haworth		Wm. Morgan, Minister of Christ Church, in Bradford'

denomination. Altogether not so pleasant a place as Hartshead, with its ample outlook over cloud-shadowed, sun-flecked plain, and hill rising beyond hill to form the distant horizon.

Here, at Thornton, Charlotte Brontë was born, on April 21, 1816. Fast on her heels followed Patrick Branwell, Emily Jane, and Anne. After the birth of this last daughter Mrs. Brontë's health began to decline. It is hard work to provide for the little tender wants of many young children where the means are but limited. The necessaries of food and clothing are much more easily supplied than the almost equal necessaries of attendance, care, soothing, amusement, and sympathy. Maria Brontë, the eldest of six, could only have been a few months more than six years old when Mr. Brontë removed to Haworth, on February 25, 1820. Those who knew her then describe her as grave, thoughtful, and quiet, to a degree far beyond her years. Her childhood was no childhood; the cases are rare in which the possessors of great gifts have known the blessings of that careless, happy time; *their* unusual powers stir within them, and, instead of the natural life of perception—the objective, as the Germans call it—they begin the deeper life of reflection—the subjective.

Little Maria Brontë was delicate and small in appearance, which seemed to give greater effect to her wonderful precocity of intellect. She must have been her mother's companion and helpmate in many a household and nursery experience, for Mr. Brontë was, of course, much engaged in his study; and, besides, he was not naturally fond of children, and felt their frequent appearance on the scene both as a drag on his wife's strength and as an interruption to the comfort of the household.

Haworth Parsonage is, as I mentioned in the first chapter, an oblong stone house, facing down the hill on which the village stands, and with the front door right opposite to the western door of the church, distant about a hundred yards. Of this space twenty yards or so in depth are occupied by the grassy garden, which is scarcely wider

than the house. The graveyard lies on two sides of the house and garden. The house consists of four rooms on each floor, and is two stories high. When the Brontës took possession they made the larger parlour, to the left of the entrance, the family sitting-room, while that on the right was appropriated to Mr. Brontë as a study. Behind this was the kitchen; behind the former, a sort of flagged store room.[1] Upstairs were four bed-chambers of similar size, with the addition of a small apartment over the passage, or 'lobby,' as we call it in the north. This was to the front, the staircase going up right opposite to the entrance. There is the pleasant old fashion of window seats all through the house; and one can see that the parsonage was built in the days when wood was plentiful, as the massive stair banisters, and the wainscots, and the heavy window frames testify.

This little extra upstairs room was appropriated to the children. Small as it was, it was not called a nursery; indeed, it had not the comfort of a fireplace in it; the servants—two affectionate, warm-hearted sisters, who cannot now speak of the family without tears—called the room the 'children's study.' The age of the eldest student was perhaps by this time seven.

The people in Haworth were none of them very poor. Many of them were employed in the neighbouring worsted mills; a few were millowners and manufacturers in a small way; there were also some shopkeepers for the humbler and everyday wants; but for medical advice, for stationery, books, law, dress, or dainties the inhabitants had to go to Keighley. There were several Sunday schools; the Baptists had taken the lead in instituting them, the Wesleyans had followed, the Church of England had brought up the rear. Good Mr. Grimshaw, Wesley's friend, had built a humble Methodist chapel, but it stood close to the road leading on to the moor; the Baptists then raised a place of

[1] The 'flagged store room' was converted into a study for Mr. Nicholls during his brief married life. It reverted to its earlier purpose during the incumbency of Mr. Wade.

THE PARSONAGE AT HAWORTH AS IT STOOD DURING THE LIVES OF THE BRONTËS.

worship, with the distinction of being a few yards back from the highway; and the Methodists have since thought it well to erect another and larger chapel, still more retired from the road. Mr. Brontë was ever on kind and friendly terms with each denomination as a body; but from individuals in the village the family stood aloof, unless some direct service was required, from the first. 'They kept themselves very close,' is the account given by those who remember Mr. and Mrs. Brontë's coming amongst them. I believe many of the Yorkshire men would object to the system of parochial visiting; their surly independence would revolt from the idea of any one having a right, from his office, to inquire into their condition, to counsel or to admonish them. The old hill spirit lingers in them which coined the rhyme, inscribed on the under part of one of the seats in the sedilia of Whalley Abbey, not many miles from Haworth—

> Who mells wi' what another does
> Had best go home and shoe his goose.

I asked an inhabitant of a district close to Haworth what sort of a clergyman they had at the church which he attended.

'A rare good one,' said he: 'he minds his own business, and ne'er troubles himself with ours.'

Mr. Brontë was faithful in visiting the sick and all those who sent for him, and diligent in attendance at the schools; and so was his daughter Charlotte too; but, cherishing and valuing privacy themselves, they were perhaps over-delicate in not intruding upon the privacy of others.

From their first going to Haworth their walks were directed rather out towards the heathery moors, sloping upwards behind the parsonage, than towards the long descending village street. A good old woman, who came to nurse Mrs. Brontë in the illness—an internal cancer—which grew and gathered upon her, not many months after her arrival at Haworth, tells me that at that time the six little creatures used to walk out, hand in hand, towards the

glorious wild moors, which in after days they loved so passionately; the elder ones taking thoughtful care for the toddling wee things.

They were grave and silent beyond their years; subdued, probably, by the presence of serious illness in the house; for, at the time which my informant speaks of, Mrs. Brontë was confined to the bedroom from which she never came forth alive. 'You would not have known there was a child in the house, they were such still, noiseless, good little creatures. Maria would shut herself up' (Maria, but seven!) 'in the children's study with a newspaper and be able to tell one everything when she came out; debates in Parliament, and I don't know what all. She was as good as a mother to her sisters and brother. But there never were such good children. I used to think them spiritless, they were so different from any children I had ever seen. They were good little creatures. Emily was the prettiest.'

Mrs. Brontë was the same patient, cheerful person as we have seen her formerly; very ill, suffering great pain, but seldom if ever complaining; at her better times begging her nurse to raise her in bed to let her see her clean the grate, 'because she did it as it was done in Cornwall;' devotedly fond of her husband, who warmly repaid her affection, and suffered no one else to take the night-nursing; but, according to my informant, the mother was not very anxious to see much of her children, probably because the sight of them, knowing how soon they were to be left motherless, would have agitated her too much. So the little things clung quietly together, for their father was busy in his study and in his parish, or with their mother, and they took their meals alone; sat reading, or whispering low, in the 'children's study,' or wandered out on the hillside, hand in hand.

The ideas of Rousseau and Mr. Day [1] on education had filtered down through many classes, and spread themselves

[1] Rousseau (1712–78) published *Emile* in 1762. Thomas Day (1748–89) published *The History of Sandford and Merton* in 1783–89.

widely out. I imagine Mr. Brontë must have formed some of his opinions on the management of children from these two theorists. His practice was not half so wild or extraordinary as that to which an aunt of mine was subjected by a disciple of Mr. Day's. She had been taken by this gentleman and his wife, to live with them as their adopted child, perhaps about five-and-twenty years before the time of which I am writing. They were wealthy people and kind-hearted, but her food and clothing were of the very simplest and rudest description, on Spartan principles. A healthy, merry child, she did not much care for dress or eating; but the treatment which she felt as a real cruelty was this: They had a carriage, in which she and the favourite dog were taken an airing on alternate days; the creature whose turn it was to be left at home being tossed in a blanket—an operation which my aunt especially dreaded. Her affright at the tossing was probably the reason why it was persevered in. Dressed-up ghosts had become common, and she did not care for them, so the blanket exercise was to be the next mode of hardening her nerves. It is well known that Mr. Day broke off his intention of marrying Sabrina, the girl whom he had educated for this purpose, because, within a few weeks of the time fixed for the wedding, she was guilty of the frivolity, while on a visit from home, of wearing thin sleeves. Yet Mr. Day and my aunt's relations were benevolent people, only strongly imbued with the crotchet that by a system of training might be educed the hardihood and simplicity of the ideal savage, forgetting the terrible isolation of feelings and habits which their pupils would experience in the future life which they must pass among the corruptions and refinements of civilisation.

Mr. Brontë wished to make his children hardy, and indifferent to the pleasures of eating and dress. In the latter he succeeded, as far as regarded his daughters.

His strong, passionate Irish nature was, in general, compressed down with resolute stoicism; but it was there not-

withstanding all his philosophic calm and dignity of demeanour; though he did not speak when he was annoyed or displeased. Mrs. Brontë, whose sweet nature thought invariably of the bright side, would say, 'Ought I not to be thankful that he never gave me an angry word?' [1]

Mr. Brontë was an active walker, stretching away over the moors for many miles, noting in his mind all natural signs of wind and weather, and keenly observing all the wild creatures that came and went in the loneliest sweeps of the hills. He has seen eagles stooping low in search of food for their young; no eagle is ever seen on those mountain slopes now.

He fearlessly took whatever side in local or national politics appeared to him right. In the days of the Luddites he had been for the peremptory interference of the law, at a time when no magistrate could be found to act, and all the property of the West Riding was in terrible danger. He became unpopular then among the mill-workers, and he esteemed his life unsafe if he took his long and lonely walks

[1] There was much discussion rife concerning Mr. Brontë during the years immediately following the publication of Mrs. Gaskell's Memoir. Certain aspects of his character were dealt with in a singularly unflattering way by Mrs. Gaskell in the first edition, but, owing to Mr. Brontë's remonstrances, the prejudicial statements were withdrawn. One of Mrs. Gaskell's informants clearly had an undue prejudice against the old incumbent of Haworth, but the unfavourable view was not shared by others who have been heard since Mrs. Gaskell wrote. Mr. Brontë in any case won the kindly judgment of his son-in-law, Mr. Nicholls, and the servant—Martha Brown—who lived with him until his death. Both asserted, and Mr. Nicholls is still alive to assert, that Mr. Brontë, with some hastiness of temper, was a good husband and father. Sir Wemyss Reid, however (*Nineteenth Century*, November 1896), whose recollections of the Brontë traditions go further back than those of any one else who has written on the subject, declares that Mrs. Gaskell had abundant ground for her estimate, and that Mr. Brontë 'in his youth and early manhood' was 'an extremely difficult person to live with.' But so also are many estimable men who, not being the parents of children of genius, succeed in passing out of life without the world's condemnation.

unarmed; so he began the habit, which has continued to this day, of invariably carrying a loaded pistol about with him. It lay on his dressing-table with his watch; with his watch it was put on in the morning; with his watch it was taken off at night.[1]

[1] Mr. Nicholls declares that Mr. Brontë's pistol-shooting was merely the harmless recreation of a country clergyman. There are traces of a bullet shot on the old tower at Haworth, but this, although pointed out as Mr. Brontë's exploit, would seem to have been the frolic of a curate. After the fashion of most of his contemporaries he frequently carried a pistol or a gun for his protection at night, and Nancy Garrs declared that at most he might have tried his skill as a marksman by firing at his own pigeons. The matter is dealt with at length in an interview with Nancy Garrs, one of the Haworth servants (*Heckmondwike Herald and Courier*, September 22, 1882):—

'Those who have read Mrs. Gaskell's book (and who in this locality has not?) will remember the extraordinary stories she tells of Mr. Brontë's inflammable temper—of his tearing into shreds a silk dress belonging to his wife, which he did not approve of her wearing; of his sawing off chair-backs and firing off pistols in the back yard in his tremendous fits of passion. They will remember also her account of the more than Spartan rigour with which he ruled his household, and his cold and unsympathetic conduct towards his gifted children. It is rather singular that Nancy denies nearly all the sensational stories told by the imaginative lady, and maintains strongly that Mr. Brontë had a calm and even temperament, and, though somewhat of a recluse, regarded with the most affectionate solicitude every member of his family, and was always kind and considerate to the humblest of his household. The story of the cutting of Mrs. Brontë's silk dress into shreds, which is repeated in Mr. T. Wemyss Reid's book, is stoutly denied by Nancy, who lived in the house at the time, and therefore, as she energetically observed to us, knew "all about it better than any book-writer." The story given by this eye-witness is as follows: Mrs. Brontë had bought a buff print dress, which was made up by her dressmaker in the then fashionable style, with balloon sleeves and a long waist. When Mr. Brontë came in to dinner and saw this new article of dress, which would doubtless strike his unsophisticated mind as being fearfully and wonderfully made, he began to banter his wife good-humouredly concerning it, commenting with special awe and wonder on the marvellous expanse of sleeve. Mrs. Brontë took all the raillery in good part, and the meal passed off pleasantly enough. In the afternoon the dress was changed and left in the room. In going into the apartment soon after Mrs. Brontë found the offending garment

Many years later, during his residence at Haworth, there was a strike; the hands in the neighbourhood felt themselves aggrieved by the masters, and refused to work: Mr. Brontë thought that they had been unjustly and unfairly treated, and he assisted them by all the means in his power to 'keep the wolf from their doors,' and avoid the incubus of debt. Several of the more influential inhabitants of Haworth and the neighbourhood were mill-owners; they remonstrated pretty sharply with him, but he believed that his conduct was right, and persevered in it.

His opinions might be often both wild and erroneous, his principles of action eccentric and strange, his views of life partial, and almost misanthropical; but not one opinion that he held could be stirred or modified by any worldly motive: he acted up to his principles of action; and, if any touch of misanthropy mingled with his view of mankind in general, his conduct to the individuals who came into personal contact with him did not agree with such view. It is true that he had strong and vehement prejudices, and was obstinate in maintaining them, and that he was not dramatic enough in his perceptions to see how miserable others might

where she had left it, but, alas! the beautiful balloon sleeves had disappeared. Remembering the badinage which had passed a few hours before, she was quite aware who had done the ruthless deed, but she does not appear to have bewailed the departed glories of her dress very much, for she soon reappeared in the kitchen with it, and laughingly held it out to view, exclaiming, "Look, Nancy, what master has done! Never mind, it will do for you," and so she handed the beautiful buff print to her delighted Abigail, who would doubtless find the absence of the balloon sleeves a decided advantage. Soon after Mr. Brontë entered the kitchen with a parcel containing a new silk dress, which he had been over to Keighley to buy, and which he presented to his wife, in place of the one whose monstrous development of sleeve had so strongly moved to action his organ of destructiveness; and thus the tragic business ended, in a manner that would, no doubt, be pleasing to all concerned. Our readers, we are sure, will agree with us in thinking that Nancy's version is decidedly more pleasing than Mrs. Gaskell's, and as she actually saw the occurrence, which is more than either that writer or her informant can say, we are inclined to think it is more probable also.'

be in a life that to him was all-sufficient. But I do not pretend to be able to harmonise points of character, and account for them, and bring them all into one consistent and intelligible whole. The family with whom I have now to do shot their roots down deeper than I can penetrate. I cannot measure them, much less is it for me to judge them. I have named these instances of eccentricity in the father because I hold the knowledge of them to be necessary for a right understanding of the life of his daughter.

Mrs. Brontë died in September 1821, and the lives of those quiet children must have become quieter and lonelier still. Charlotte tried hard, in after years, to recall the remembrance of her mother, and could bring back two or three pictures of her. One was when, some time in the evening light, she had been playing with her little boy, Patrick Branwell, in the parlour of Haworth Parsonage. But the recollections of four or five years old are of a very fragmentary character.[1]

Owing to some illness of the digestive organs Mr. Brontë was obliged to be very careful about his diet; and, in order to avoid temptation, and possibly to have the quiet necessary for digestion, he had begun, before his wife's death, to take his dinner alone—a habit which he always retained. He did not require companionship; therefore he did not seek it,

[1] There are two interesting reminiscences of Mrs. Brontë extant; one is a copy of 'Thomas à Kempis,' John Wesley's abridgment. It is inscribed 'M. Branwell, July 1807.' This book was evidently brought by Mrs. Brontë from Penzance. On the fly-leaf Charlotte Brontë has written as follows:—

'C. Brontë's book. This book was given to me in July 1826. It is not certainly known who is the author, but it is generally supposed that Thomas à Kempis is. I saw a reward of 10,000*l.* offered in the *Leeds Mercury* to any one who could find out for a certainty who is the author.'

The other relic is a sampler containing the usual alphabet that children work or worked, and the text, 'Flee from sin as from a serpent, for if thou comest too near to it it will bite thee: the teeth thereof are as the teeth of a lion to slay the souls of men,' followed by the name:—*Maria Branwell ended her sampler April* 15, 1791.

either in his walks or in his daily life. The quiet regularity of his domestic hours was only broken in upon by church-wardens, and visitors on parochial business; and sometimes by a neighbouring clergyman, who came down the hills, across the moors, to mount up again to Haworth Parsonage, and spend an evening there. But, owing to Mrs. Brontë's death so soon after her husband had removed into the district, and also to the distances, and the bleak country to be traversed, the wives of these clerical friends did not accompany their husbands; and the daughters grew up out of childhood into girlhood bereft, in a singular manner, of all such society as would have been natural to their age, sex, and station.

But the children did not want society. To small infantine gaieties they were unaccustomed. They were all in all to each other. I do not suppose that there ever was a family more tenderly bound to each other. Maria read the newspapers, and reported intelligence to her younger sisters which it is wonderful they could take an interest in. But I suspect that they had no 'children's books,' and that their eager minds 'browsed undisturbed among the wholesome pasturage of English literature,' as Charles Lamb expresses it. The servants of the household appear to have been much impressed with the little Brontës' extraordinary cleverness. In a letter which I had from him on this subject their father writes, 'The servants often said that they had never seen such a clever little child' (as Charlotte), 'and that they were obliged to be on their guard as to what they said and did before her. Yet she and the servants always lived on good terms with each other.'

These servants are yet alive; elderly women residing in Bradford.[1] They retain a faithful and fond recollection of

[1] The servants were Sarah and Nancy Garrs, Martha Brown, and Tabitha. Nancy Malone, born Garrs, or de Garrs, was the daughter of a shoemaker of Bradford. At twelve years of age she was engaged by Mrs. Brontë, then at Thornton, as nurse-girl, and she nursed Charlotte, Emily, Branwell, and Anne. She accompanied the family to Haworth, and

Charlotte, and speak of her unvarying kindness from the 'time when she was ever such a little child,' when she would not rest till she had got the old disused cradle sent from the parsonage to the house where the parents of one of them lived, to serve for a little infant sister. They tell of one long series of kind and thoughtful actions from this early period to the last weeks of Charlotte Brontë's life; and, though she had left her place many years ago, one of these former servants went over from Bradford to Haworth on purpose to see Mr. Brontë, and offer him her true sympathy, when his last child died. I may add a little anecdote as a testimony to the admirable character of the likeness of Miss Brontë prefixed to this volume.[1] A gentleman who had kindly interested himself in the preparation of this memoir took the first volume, shortly after the publication, to the house of this old servant, in order to show her the portrait. The moment she caught a glimpse of the frontispiece, 'There she is,' she exclaimed. Come, John, look!' (to her husband); and her daughter was equally struck by the resemblance. There might not be many to

remained there as cook, her younger sister, Sarah, taking her place as nurse. She remained with the Brontës until she married and became Mrs. Wainwright. At a later date she married John Malone, a workingman. She died in 1886 in the Bradford workhouse in her eighty-second year. Her sister Sarah also married, and, as Mrs. Newsome, is still alive in Iowa City, U.S.A. Nancy Malone disliked all disparaging references to Mr. Brontë, and declared that 'a kinder master never drew breath.' Martha Brown was a native of Haworth and servant with the Brontës from her tenth year, when she went to assist 'Tabby.' She became housekeeper at the parsonage from Charlotte's death in 1855 until the death of Mr. Brontë in 1861. She died at Haworth, January 19, 1880, and is buried in Haworth Churchyard. For 'Tabby,' or Tabitha Aykroyd, see notes on pp. 60 and 164.

[1] The portrait of Charlotte Brontë which has hitherto accompanied Mrs. Gaskell's biography, and is prefixed to the *Jane Eyre* of the present edition, is that by George Richmond—the only authentic likeness extant. The original is in the possession of Mr. A. B. Nicholls, and is destined by him for the National Portrait Gallery.

regard the Brontës with affection; but those who once loved them loved them long and well.

I return to the father's letter. He says:—

'When mere children, as soon as they could read and write, Charlotte and her brother and sisters used to invent and act little plays of their own, in which the Duke of Wellington, my daughter Charlotte's hero, was sure to come off conqueror; when a dispute would not unfrequently arise amongst them regarding the comparative merits of him, Buonaparte, Hannibal, and Cæsar. When the argument got warm, and rose to its height, as their mother was then dead, I had sometimes to come in as arbitrator, and settle the dispute according to the best of my judgment. Generally, in the management of these concerns, I frequently thought that I discovered signs of rising talent, which I had seldom or never before seen in any of their age. . . . A circumstance now occurs to my mind which I may as well mention. When my children were very young, when, as far as I can remember, the oldest was about ten years of age, and the youngest about four, thinking that they knew more than I had yet discovered, in order to make them speak with less timidity, I deemed that if they were put under a sort of cover I might gain my end; and happening to have a mask in the house, I told them all to stand back and speak boldly from under cover of the mask.

'I began with the youngest (Anne, afterwards Acton Bell), and asked what a child like her most wanted; she answered, "Age and experience." I asked the next (Emily, afterwards Ellis Bell) what I had best do with her brother, Branwell, who was sometimes a naughty boy; she answered, "Reason with him, and when he won't listen to reason whip him." I asked Branwell what was the best way of knowing the difference between the intellects of man and woman; he answered, "By considering the difference between them as to their bodies." I then asked Charlotte what was the best book in the world; she answered, "The Bible." And what was the next best; she answered, "The Book of Nature."

I then asked the next what was the best mode of education for a woman; she answered, "That which would make her rule her house well." Lastly, I asked the oldest what was the best mode of spending time; she answered, "By laying it out in preparation for a happy eternity." I may not have given precisely their words, but I have nearly done so, as they made a deep and lasting impression on my memory. The substance, however, was exactly what I have stated.'

The strange and quaint simplicity of the mode taken by the father to ascertain the hidden characters of his children, and the tone and character of these questions and answers, show the curious education which was made by the circumstances surrounding the Brontës. They knew no other children. They knew no other modes of thought than what were suggested to them by the fragments of clerical conversation which they overheard in the parlour, or the subjects of village and local interest which they heard discussed in the kitchen. Each had its own strong characteristic flavour.

They took a vivid interest in the public characters, and the local and foreign as well as home politics discussed in the newspapers. Long before Maria Brontë died, at the age of eleven, her father used to say he could converse with her on any of the leading topics of the day with as much freedom and pleasure as with any grown-up person.

CHAPTER IV

About a year after Mrs. Brontë's death an elder sister, as I have before mentioned, came from Penzance to superintend her brother-in-law's household and look after his children. Miss Branwell[1] was, I believe, a kindly and conscientious

[1] Elizabeth Branwell, by many supposed—although altogether wrongly—to have been the original in some aspects of Mrs. Reed in *Jane Eyre*, would seem to have been genuinely devoted to her nieces. Among relics of her that survive are the work-boxes that she left in her will to Charlotte and Anne, and a sampler doubtless brought among her modest treasures from Penzance to Haworth. Miss Ellen Nussey's descriptions of the aunt and of 'Tabby' the servant are the best that I have seen :—

'Miss Branwell was a very small, antiquated little lady ; she wore caps large enough for half a dozen of the present fashion, and a front of light auburn curls over her forehead. She always dressed in silk. She talked a great deal of her younger days, the gaieties of her native town, Penzance, in Cornwall, the soft warm climate, &c. She very probably had been a belle among her acquaintances ; the social life of her younger days she appeared to recall with regret. She took snuff out of a very pretty little gold snuff-box, which she sometimes presented with a little laugh, as if she enjoyed the slight shock and astonishment visible in your countenance. In summer she spent most of her afternoons in reading aloud to Mr. Brontë, and in the winter evenings she must have enjoyed this, for she and Mr. Brontë had sometimes to finish their discussions on what she had read when we all met for tea ; she would be very lively and intelligent in her talk, and tilted argument without fear against Mr. Brontë.

'"Tabby," the faithful, trustworthy old servant, was very quaint in appearance, very active, and in those days was the general servant and factotum. We were all "children" and "bairns" in her estimation. She still kept to her duty of walking out with the "children" if they went any distance from home, unless Branwell were sent by his father as protector. In later days, after she had been attacked with paralysis, she would anxiously look out for such duties as she was still capable of. The postman was her special point of attention ; she did not approve of the inspections which the younger eyes of her fellow servant bestowed on his

woman, with a good deal of character, but with the somewhat narrow ideas natural to one who had spent nearly all her life in the same place. She had strong prejudices, and soon took a distaste to Yorkshire. From Penzance, where plants which we in the north call greenhouse flowers grow in great profusion, and without any shelter even in the winter, and where the soft warm climate allows the inhabitants, if so disposed, to live pretty constantly in the open air, it was a great change for a lady considerably past forty to come and take up her abode in a place where neither flowers nor vegetables would flourish, and where a tree of even moderate dimensions might be hunted for far and wide; where the snow lay long and late on the moors, stretching bleakly and barely far up from the dwelling which was henceforward to be her home; and where often, on autumnal or winter nights, the four winds of heaven seemed to meet and rage together, tearing round the house as if they were wild beasts striving to find an entrance. She missed the small round of cheerful social visiting perpetually going on in a country town; she missed the friends she had known from her childhood, some of whom had been her parents' friends before they were hers; she disliked many of the customs of the place, and particularly dreaded the cold damp arising from the flag floors in the passages and parlours of Haworth Parsonage. The stairs, too, I believe, are made of stone; and no wonder, when stone quarries are near and trees are far to seek. I have heard that Miss Branwell always went about the house on pattens, clicking up and down the stairs, from her dread of catching cold. For the same reason, in the latter years of her life, she passed nearly all her time, and took most of her meals, in her bedroom. The children respected her, and had that sort of affection for her which is generated by esteem; but I do not think they ever freely loved her. It was a severe trial for any one at her

deliveries; she jealously seized them (when she could), and carried them off with hobbling step and shaking head and hand to the safe custody of Charlotte.'

time of life to change neighbourhood and habitation so entirely as she did; and the greater her merit.

I do not know whether Miss Branwell taught her nieces anything besides sewing,[1] and the household arts in which Charlotte afterwards was such an adept. Their regular lessons were said to their father; and they were always in the habit of picking up an immense amount of miscellaneous information for themselves. But a year or so before this time a school had been begun in the North of England for the daughters of clergymen. The place was Cowan Bridge, a small hamlet on the coach road between Leeds and Kendal, and thus easy of access from Haworth, as the coach ran daily, and one of its stages was at Keighley. The yearly expense for each pupil (according to the entrance rules given in the Report for 1842, and I believe they had not been increased since the establishment of the school in 1823) was as follows:—

'Rule II. The terms for clothing, lodging, boarding, and educating are 14*l.* a year; half to be paid in advance, when the pupils are sent; and also 1*l.* entrance money, for the use of books, &c. The system of education comprehends history, geography, the use of the globes, grammar, writing and arithmetic, all kinds of needle work, and the nicer kinds of household work, such as getting up fine linen, ironing, &c. If accomplishments are required an additional charge of 3*l.* a year is made for music or drawing, each.'

Rule III. requests that the friends will state the line of education desired in the case of every pupil, having a regard to her future prospects.

Rule IV. states the clothing and toilette articles which a girl is expected to bring with her; and thus concludes: 'The pupils all appear in the same dress. They wear plain straw cottage bonnets; in summer white frocks on Sundays, and

[1] Charlotte's gifts of sewing were marked. Her friend Miss Lætitia Wheelwright possesses a beautifully worked bag which Miss Brontë made for Mrs. Wheelwright when on a visit to London. A neatly worked bead purse, also the outcome of her skill, was sold at Sotheby's in 1898.

nankeen on other days; in winter, purple stuff frocks, and purple cloth cloaks. For the sake of uniformity, therefore, they are required to bring 3*l.* in lieu of frocks, pelisse, bonnet, tippet, and frills, making the whole sum which each pupil brings with her to the school—

7*l.* half-year in advance.
1*l.* entrance for books.
1*l.* entrance for clothes.'

The 8th rule is, 'All letters and parcels are inspected by the superintendent;' but this is a very prevalent regulation in all young ladies' schools, where I think it is generally understood that the schoolmistress may exercise this privilege, although it is certainly unwise in her to insist too frequently upon it.

There is nothing at all remarkable in any of the other regulations, a copy of which was doubtless in Mr. Brontë's hands when he formed the determination to send his daughters to Cowan Bridge School; and he accordingly took Maria and Elizabeth thither in July 1824.[1]

I now come to a part of my subject which I find great difficulty in treating, because the evidence relating to it on each side is so conflicting that it seems almost impossible to arrive at the truth. Miss Brontë more than once said to me that she should not have written what she did of Lowood in 'Jane Eyre,' if she had thought the place would have been

[1] The *Journal of Education* for January 1900 contained the following extracts from the school register of the Clergy Daughters' School at Casterton:—

'Charlotte Brontë. Entered August 10, 1824. Writes indifferently. Ciphers a little, and works neatly. Knows nothing of grammar, geography, history, or accomplishments. Altogether clever of her age, but knows nothing systematically (at eight years old!). Left school June 1, 1825.—Governess.'

The following entries may also be of interest:—

'Marie Brontë, aged 10 (daughter of Patrick Brontë, Haworth, near Keighley, Yorks). July 1, 1824. Reads tolerably. Writes pretty well. Ciphers a little. Works badly. Very little of geography or history. Has made some progress in reading French, but knows nothing of the

so immediately identified with Cowan Bridge, although there was not a word in her account of the institution but what was true at the time when she knew it; she also said that she had not considered it necessary, in a work of fiction, to state every particular with the impartiality that might be required in a court of justice, nor to seek out motives, and make allowances for human failings, as she might have done, if dispassionately analysing the conduct of those who had the superintendence of the institution. I believe she herself would have been glad of an opportunity to correct the over-strong impression which was made upon the public mind by her vivid picture, though even she, suffering her whole life long, both in heart and body, from the consequences of what happened there, might have been apt, to the last, to take her deep belief in facts for the facts themselves—her conception of truth for the absolute truth.

In some of the notices of the previous editions of this work it is assumed that I derived the greater part of my information with regard to her sojourn at Cowan Bridge from Charlotte Brontë herself. I never heard her speak of the place but once, and that was on the second day of my acquaintance with her. A little child on that occasion expressed some reluctance to finish eating his piece of bread at dinner; and she, stooping down, and addressing him in a low voice, told him how thankful she would have been at his age for a piece of bread; and when we—though I am not sure if I myself spoke—asked her some question as to

language grammatically. Left February 14, 1825, in ill-health, and died May 16, 1825.'

(Her father's account of her is:—'She exhibited during her illness many symptoms of a heart under Divine influence. Died of decline.')

'Elizabeth Brontë, age 9. (Vaccinated. Scarlet fever, whooping cough.) Reads little. Writes pretty well. Ciphers none (*sic*). Works very badly. Knows nothing of grammar, geography, history, or accomplishments. Left in ill-health, May 31, 1825. Died June 13, 1825, in decline.'

'Emily Brontë. Entered November 25, 1824, aged $5\frac{3}{4}$. Reads very prettily, and works a little. Left June 1, 1825. Subsequent career.—Governess.'

the occasion she alluded to, she replied with reserve and hesitation, evidently shying away from what she imagined might lead to too much conversation on one of her books. She spoke of the oat cake at Cowan Bridge (the clap-bread of Westmoreland) as being different from the leaven-raised oat cake of Yorkshire, and of her childish distaste for it. Some one present made an allusion to a similar childish dislike in the true tale of 'the terrible knitters o' Dent,' given in Southey's 'Commonplace Book;' and she smiled faintly, but said that the mere difference in food was not all: that the food itself was spoilt by the dirty carelessness of the cook, so that she and her sisters disliked their meals exceedingly; and she mentioned her relief and gladness when the doctor condemned the meat, and spoke of having seen him spit it out. These are all the details I ever heard from her. She so avoided particularising that I think Mr. Carus Wilson's name never passed between us.

I do not doubt the general accuracy of my informants—of those who have given, and solemnly repeated, the details that follow—but it is only just to Miss Brontë to say that I have stated above pretty nearly all that I ever heard on the subject from her.

A clergyman, living near Kirby Lonsdale, the Reverend William Carus Wilson,[1] was the prime mover in the establishment of this school. He was an energetic man, sparing no labour for the accomplishment of his ends. He saw that it was an extremely difficult task for clergymen with limited incomes to provide for the education of their children; and he devised a scheme, by which a certain sum was raised annually by subscription, to complete the amount required to furnish a solid and sufficient English education, for which

[1] William Carus Wilson (1792–1859) lived at Casterton Hall, near Kirby Lonsdale. Wrote *Sermons*, 1825; *Life of Mrs. Dawson*, 1828; *Youthful Memoirs*, 1828; *Plan for Building Churches and Schools*, 1842; *Sermons*, 1842; *Christ Revealed*, 1849; *Child's First Tales*, 1849; *Soldier's Cry from India*, 1858. He also issued two serials, the *Friendly Visitor* and the *Children's Friend*. He was buried in Casterton Church.

the parents' payment of 14*l.* a year would not have been sufficient. Indeed, that made by the parents was considered to be exclusively appropriated to the expenses of lodging and boarding, and the education provided for by the subscriptions. Twelve trustees were appointed; Mr. Wilson being not only a trustee, but the treasurer and secretary; in fact, taking most of the business arrangements upon himself; a responsibility which appropriately fell to him, as he lived nearer the school than any one else who was interested in it. So his character for prudence and judgment was to a certain degree implicated in the success or failure of Cowan Bridge School; and the working of it was for many years the great object and interest of his life. But he was apparently unacquainted with the prime element in good administration—seeking out thoroughly competent persons to fill each department, and then making them responsible for, and judging them by, the result, without perpetual interference with the details.

So great was the amount of good which Mr. Wilson did, by his constant, unwearied superintendence, that I cannot help feeling sorry that, in his old age and declining health, the errors which he was believed to have committed should have been brought up against him in a form which received such wonderful force from the touch of Miss Brontë's great genius. No doubt whatever can be entertained of the deep interest which he felt in the success of the school. As I write I have before me his last words on giving up the secretaryship in 1850: he speaks of the 'withdrawal, from declining health, of an eye, which, at all events, has loved to watch over the school with an honest and anxious interest;' —and again he adds 'that he resigns, therefore, with a desire to be thankful for all that God has been pleased to accomplish through his instrumentality (the infirmities and unworthiness of which he deeply feels and deplores).'

Cowan Bridge is a cluster of some six or seven cottages, gathered together at both ends of a bridge, over which the highroad from Leeds to Kendal crosses a little stream,

called the Leck. This highroad is nearly disused now; but formerly, when the buyers from the West Riding manufacturing districts had frequent occasion to go up into the North to purchase the wool of the Westmoreland and Cumberland farmers, it was doubtless much travelled; and perhaps the hamlet of Cowan Bridge had a more prosperous look than it bears at present. It is prettily situated; just where the Leck fells swoop into the plain; and by the course of the beck alder trees and willows and hazel bushes grow. The current of the stream is interrupted by broken pieces of grey rock; and the waters flow over a bed of large round white pebbles, which a flood heaves up and moves on either side out of its impetuous way till in some parts they almost form a wall. By the side of the little, shallow, sparkling, vigorous Leck run long pasture fields, of the fine short grass common in high land; for though Cowan Bridge is situated on a plain, it is a plain from which there is many a fall and long descent before you and the Leck reach the valley of the Lune. I can hardly understand how the school there came to be so unhealthy; the air all round about was so sweet and thyme-scented when I visited it last summer. But at this day every one knows that the site of a building intended for numbers should be chosen with far greater care than that of a private dwelling, from the tendency to illness, both infectious and otherwise, produced by the congregation of people in close proximity.

The house is still remaining that formed part of that occupied by the school. It is a long bow-windowed cottage, now divided into two dwellings. It stands facing the Leck, between which and it intervenes a space, about seventy yards deep, that was once the school garden. This original house was an old dwelling of the Picard family, which they had inhabited for two generations. They sold it for school purposes, and an additional building was erected, running at right angles from the older part. This new part was devoted expressly to schoolrooms, dormitories, &c.; and after the school was removed to Casterton it was used for a bobbin

mill connected with the stream, where wooden reels were made out of the alders which grow profusely in such ground as that surrounding Cowan Bridge. This mill is now destroyed. The present cottage was, at the time of which I write, occupied by the teachers' rooms, the dining-room and kitchens, and some smaller bedrooms. On going into this building I found one part, that nearest to the highroad, converted into a poor kind of public-house, then to let, and having all the squalid appearance of a deserted place, which rendered it difficult to judge what it would look like when neatly kept up, the broken panes replaced in the windows, and the rough-cast (now cracked and discoloured) made white and whole. The other end forms a cottage, with the low ceilings and stone floors of a hundred years ago; the windows do not open freely and widely; and the passage upstairs, leading to the bedrooms, is narrow and tortuous: altogether, smells would linger about the house, and damp cling to it. But sanitary matters were little understood thirty years ago; and it was a great thing to get a roomy building close to the highroad, and not too far from the habitation of Mr. Wilson, the originator of the educational scheme. There was much need of such an institution; numbers of ill-paid clergymen hailed the prospect with joy, and eagerly put down the names of their children as pupils when the establishment should be ready to receive them. Mr. Wilson was, no doubt, pleased by the impatience with which the realisation of his idea was anticipated, and opened the school with less than a hundred pounds in hand, and with pupils the number of whom varies according to different accounts, Mr. W. W. Carus Wilson, the son of the founder, giving it as seventy, while Mr. Shepheard, the son-in-law, states it to have been only sixteen.

Mr. Wilson felt, most probably, that the responsibility of the whole plan rested upon him. The payment made by the parents was barely enough for food and lodging; the subscriptions did not flow very freely into an untried scheme; and great economy was necessary in all the domestic ar-

rangements. He determined to enforce this by frequent personal inspection, carried, perhaps, to an unnecessary extent, and leading occasionally to a meddling with little matters, which had sometimes the effect of producing irritation of feeling. Yet, although there was economy in providing for the household, there does not appear to have been any parsimony. The meat, flour, milk, &c., were contracted for, but were of very fair quality; and the dietary, which has been shown to me in manuscript, was neither bad nor unwholesome; nor, on the whole, was it wanting in variety. Oatmeal porridge for breakfast; a piece of oat cake for those who required luncheon; baked and boiled beef, and mutton, potato pie, and plain homely puddings of different kinds for dinner. At five o'clock, bread and milk for the younger ones; and one piece of bread (this was the only time at which the food was limited) for the elder pupils, who sat up till a later meal of the same description.

Mr. Wilson himself ordered in the food, and was anxious that it should be of good quality. But the cook, who had much of his confidence, and against whom for a long time no one durst utter a complaint, was careless, dirty, and wasteful. To some children oatmeal porridge is distasteful, and consequently unwholesome, even when properly made; at Cowan Bridge School it was too often sent up, not merely burnt, but with offensive fragments of other substances discoverable in it. The beef, that should have been carefully salted before it was dressed, had often become tainted from neglect; and girls, who were schoolfellows with the Brontës during the reign of the cook of whom I am speaking, tell me that the house seemed to be pervaded, morning, noon, and night, by the odour of rancid fat that steamed out of the oven in which much of their food was prepared. There was the same carelessness in making the puddings; one of those ordered was rice boiled in water, and eaten with a sauce of treacle or sugar; but it was often uneatable, because the water had been taken out of the rain tub, and was strongly impregnated with the dust lodging on the roof, whence it

had trickled down into the old wooden cask, which also added its own flavour to that of the original rain water. The milk, too, was often 'bingy,' to use a country expression for a kind of taint that is far worse than sourness, and suggests the idea that is caused by want of cleanliness about the milk pans, rather than by the heat of the weather. On Saturdays a kind of pie, or mixture of potatoes and meat, was served up, which was made of all the fragments accumulated during the week. Scraps of meat, from a dirty and disorderly larder, could never be very appetising; and I believe that this dinner was more loathed than any in the early days of Cowan Bridge School. One may fancy how repulsive such fare would be to children whose appetites were small, and who had been accustomed to food, far simpler perhaps, but prepared with a delicate cleanliness that made it both tempting and wholesome. At many a meal the little Brontës went without food, although craving with hunger. They were not strong when they came, having only just recovered from a complication of measles and hooping-cough. Indeed, I suspect they had scarcely recovered; for there was some consultation on the part of the school authorities whether Maria and Elizabeth should be received or not, in July 1824. Mr. Brontë came again in the September of that year, bringing with him Charlotte and Emily to be admitted as pupils.

It appears strange that Mr. Wilson should not have been informed by the teachers of the way in which the food was served up; but we must remember that the cook had been known for some time to the Wilson family, while the teachers were brought together for an entirely different work—that of education. They were expressly given to understand that such was their department; the buying in and management of the provisions rested with Mr. Wilson and the cook. The teachers would, of course, be unwilling to lay any complaints on the subject before him.

There was another trial of health common to all the girls. The path from Cowan Bridge to Tunstall Church, where Mr. Wilson preached, and where they all attended on the Sun-

day, is more than two miles in length, and goes sweeping along the rise and fall of the unsheltered country, in a way to make it a fresh and exhilarating walk in summer, but a bitterly cold one in winter, especially to children like the delicate little Brontës, whose thin blood flowed languidly in consequence of their feeble appetites rejecting the food prepared for them, and thus inducing a half-starved condition. The church was not warmed, there being no means for this purpose. It stands in the midst of fields, and the damp mist must have gathered round the walls, and crept in at the windows. The girls took their cold dinner with them, and ate it between the services, in a chamber over the entrance, opening out of the former galleries. The arrangements for this day were peculiarly trying to delicate children, particularly to those who were spiritless and longing for home, as poor Maria Brontë must have been; for her ill health was increasing, and the old cough, the remains of the hooping-cough, lingered about her.

She was far superior in mind to any of her playfellows and companions, and was lonely amongst them from that very cause; and yet she had faults so annoying that she was in constant disgrace with her teachers, and an object of merciless dislike to one of them, who is depicted as 'Miss Scatcherd' in 'Jane Eyre,' and whose real name I will be merciful enough not to disclose. I need hardly say that Helen Burns is as exact a transcript of Maria Brontë as Charlotte's wonderful power of reproducing character could give. Her heart, to the latest day on which we met, still beat with unavailing indignation at the worrying and the cruelty to which her gentle, patient, dying sister had been subjected by this woman. Not a word of that part of 'Jane Eyre' but is a literal repetition of scenes between the pupil and the teacher. Those who had been pupils at the same time knew who must have written the book from the force with which Helen Burns's sufferings are described. They had, before that, recognised the description of the sweet dignity and benevolence of Miss Temple as only a just tribute to the

merits of one whom all that knew her appear to hold in honour; but when Miss Scatcherd was held up to opprobrium they also recognised in the writer of 'Jane Eyre' an unconsciously avenging sister of the sufferer.

One of their fellow pupils, among other statements even worse, gives me the following: The dormitory in which Maria slept was a long room, holding a row of narrow little beds on each side, occupied by the pupils; and at the end of this dormitory there was a small bedchamber opening out of it, appropriated to the use of Miss Scatcherd. Maria's bed stood nearest to the door of this room. One morning, after she had become so seriously unwell as to have had a blister applied to her side (the sore from which was not perfectly healed), when the getting-up bell was heard, poor Maria moaned out that she was so ill, so very ill, she wished she might stop in bed; and some of the girls urged her to do so, and said they would explain it all to Miss Temple, the superintendent. But Miss Scatcherd was close at hand, and her anger would have to be faced before Miss Temple's kind thoughtfulness could interfere; so the sick child began to dress, shivering with cold, as, without leaving her bed, she slowly put on her black worsted stockings over her thin white legs (my informant spoke as if she saw it yet, and her whole face flushed out undying indignation). Just then Miss Scatcherd issued from her room, and, without asking for a word of explanation from the sick and frightened girl, she took her by the arm, on the side to which the blister had been applied, and by one vigorous movement whirled her out into the middle of the floor, abusing her all the time for dirty and untidy habits. There she left her. My informant says Maria hardly spoke, except to beg some of the more indignant girls to be calm; but, in slow, trembling movements, with many a pause, she went downstairs at last—and was punished for being late.

Any one may fancy how such an event as this would rankle in Charlotte's mind. I only wonder that she did not remonstrate against her father's decision to send her and

Emily back to Cowan Bridge after Maria's and Elizabeth's deaths. But frequently children are unconscious of the effect which some of their simple revelations would have in altering the opinions entertained by their friends of the persons placed around them. Besides, Charlotte's earnest, vigorous mind saw, at an unusually early age, the immense importance of education, as furnishing her with tools which she had the strength and the will to wield, and she would be aware that the Cowan Bridge education was, in many points, the best that her father could provide for her.

Before Maria Brontë's death that low fever broke out, in the spring of 1825, which is spoken of in 'Jane Eyre.' Mr. Wilson was extremely alarmed at the first symptoms of this. He went to a kind motherly woman, who had had some connection with the school—as laundress, I believe—and asked her to come and tell him what was the matter with them. She made herself ready, and drove with him in his gig. When she entered the schoolroom she saw from twelve to fifteen girls lying about; some resting their aching heads on the table, others on the ground; all heavy-eyed, flushed, indifferent, and weary, with pains in every limb. Some peculiar odour, she says, made her recognise that they were sickening for 'the fever;' and she told Mr. Wilson so, and that she could not stay there for fear of conveying the infection to her own children; but he half commanded and half entreated her to remain and nurse them; and finally mounted his gig and drove away, while she was still urging that she must return to her own house, and to her domestic duties, for which she had provided no substitute. However, when she was left in this unceremonious manner, she determined to make the best of it; and a most efficient nurse she proved: although, as she says, it was a dreary time.

Mr. Wilson supplied everything ordered by the doctors, of the best quality and in the most liberal manner; the invalids were attended by Dr. Batty, a very clever surgeon in Kirby, who had had the medical superintendence of the establishment from the beginning, and who afterwards

became Mr. Wilson's brother-in-law. I have heard from two witnesses besides Charlotte Brontë that Dr. Batty condemned the preparation of the food by the expressive action of spitting out a portion of it. He himself, it is but fair to say, does not remember this circumstance, nor does he speak of the fever itself as either alarming or dangerous. About forty of the girls suffered from this, but none of them died at Cowan Bridge; though one died at her own home, sinking under the state of health which followed it. None of the Brontës had the fever. But the same causes, which affected the health of the other pupils through typhus, told more slowly, but not less surely, upon their constitutions. The principal of these causes was the food.

The bad management of the cook was chiefly to be blamed for this; she was dismissed, and the woman who had been forced against her will to serve as head nurse took the place of housekeeper; and henceforward the food was so well prepared that no one could ever reasonably complain of it. Of course it cannot be expected that a new institution, comprising domestic and educational arrangements for nearly a hundred persons, should work quite smoothly at the beginning.

All this occurred during the first two years of the establishment, and in estimating its effect upon the character of Charlotte Brontë we must remember that she was a sensitive, thoughtful child, capable of reflecting deeply, if not of analysing truly; and peculiarly susceptible, as are all delicate and sickly children, to painful impressions. What the healthy suffer from but momentarily, and then forget, those who are ailing brood over involuntarily and remember long—perhaps with no resentment, but simply as a piece of suffering that has been stamped into their very life. The pictures, ideas, and conceptions of character received into the mind of the child of eight years old, were destined to be reproduced in fiery words a quarter of a century afterwards. She saw but one side of Mr. Wilson's character; and many of those who knew him at that time assure me of the fidelity with which this is represented, while at the same time they

regret that the delineation should have obliterated, as it were, nearly all that was noble or conscientious. And that there were grand and fine qualities in Mr. Wilson I have received abundant evidence. Indeed, for several weeks past I have received letters almost daily, bearing on the subject of this chapter; some vague, some definite; many full of love and admiration for Mr. Wilson, some as full of dislike and indignation; few containing positive facts. After giving careful consideration to this mass of conflicting evidence, I have made such alterations and omissions in this chapter as seem to me to be required. It is but just to state that the major part of the testimony with which I have been favoured from old pupils is in high praise of Mr. Wilson. Among the letters that I have read there is one whose evidence ought to be highly respected. It is from the husband of 'Miss Temple.' She died in 1856, but he, a clergyman, thus wrote in reply to a letter addressed to him on the subject by one of Mr. Wilson's friends: 'Often have I heard my late dear wife speak of her sojourn at Cowan Bridge; always in terms of admiration of Mr. Carus Wilson, his parental love to his pupils, and their love for him; of the food and general treatment, in terms of approval. I have heard her allude to an unfortunate cook, who used at times to spoil the porridge, but who, she said, was soon dismissed.'

The recollections left of the four Brontë sisters at this period of their lives, on the minds of those who associated with them, are not very distinct. Wild, strong hearts and powerful minds were hidden under an enforced propriety and regularity of demeanour and expression, just as their faces had been concealed by their father under his stiff, unchanging mask. Maria was delicate, unusually clever and thoughtful for her age, gentle, and untidy. Of her frequent disgrace from this last fault—of her sufferings, so patiently borne—I have already spoken. The only glimpse we get of Elizabeth, through the few years of her short life, is contained in a letter which I have received from 'Miss Temple.' 'The second, Elizabeth, is the only one of the family of

whom I have a vivid recollection, from her meeting with a somewhat alarming accident, in consequence of which I had her for some days and nights in my bedroom, not only for the sake of greater quiet, but that I might watch over her myself. Her head was severely cut, but she bore all the consequent suffering with exemplary patience, and by it won much upon my esteem. Of the two younger ones (if two there were) I have very slight recollections, save that one, a darling child, under five years of age, was quite the pet nurseling of the school.' This last would be Emily. Charlotte was considered the most talkative of the sisters—a 'bright, clever little child.' Her great friend was a certain 'Mellany Hane' (so Mr. Brontë spells the name), whose brother paid for her schooling, and who had no remarkable talent except for music, which her brother's circumstances forbade her to cultivate. She was 'a hungry, good-natured, ordinary girl;' older than Charlotte, and ever ready to protect her from any petty tyranny or encroachments on the part of the elder girls. Charlotte always remembered her with affection and gratitude.

I have quoted the word 'bright' in the account of Charlotte. I suspect that this year of 1825 was the last time it could ever be applied to her.[1] In the spring of it

[1] This suggestion that all 'brightness' went out of Charlotte Brontë's life thus early is one that has been vigorously disputed. Mr. (now Sir) Wemyss Reid (*Charlotte Brontë: a Monograph*) brought together, in 1877—twenty years after Mrs. Gaskell had written—a number of details and fragments of at that time unpublished correspondence, in order to demonstrate that Mrs. Gaskell had pitched her work in too sombre a key. 'If the truth must be told,' said Mr. Reid, 'the life of the author of *Jane Eyre* was by no means so joyless as the world now believes it to have been. . . . On the contrary, her letters show that, at any rate up to the time of her leaving for Brussels, she was a happy and high-spirited girl, that even to the very last she had the faculty of overcoming her sorrows by means of that steadfast courage which was her most precious possession.' Sir Wemyss Reid, by judiciously quoting certain passages omitted by Mrs. Gaskell from the correspondence, may be said to have proved his case, or rather to have effectively presented the other side of the shield. To understand Charlotte Brontë on that side is to understand

Maria became so rapidly worse that Mr. Brontë was sent for. He had not previously been aware of her illness, and the condition in which he found her was a terrible shock to him. He took her home in the Leeds coach, the girls crowding out into the road to follow her with their eyes over the bridge, past the cottages, and then out of sight for ever. She died a very few days after her arrival at home. Perhaps the news of her death falling suddenly into the life of which her patient existence had formed a part, only a little week or so before, made those who remained at Cowan Bridge look with more anxiety on Elizabeth's symptoms, which also turned out to be consumptive. She was sent home in charge of a confidential servant of the establishment; and she, too, died in the early summer of that year. Charlotte was thus suddenly called into the responsibilities of eldest sister in a motherless family. She remembered how anxiously her dear sister Maria had striven, in her grave, earnest way, to be a tender helper and a counsellor to them all; and the duties that now fell upon her seemed almost like a legacy from the gentle little sufferer so lately dead.

Both Charlotte and Emily returned to school after the midsummer holidays in this fatal year. But before the next winter it was thought desirable to advise their removal, as it was evident that the damp situation of the house at Cowan Bridge did not suit their health.[1]

her inheritance from her father of a distinctly Celtic temperament—the temperament of alternate high spirits and boundless exhilaration followed by long periods of depression and melancholy. Charlotte Brontë was a woman of moods that many a placid Englishwoman would have found unaccountable.

[1] With regard to my own opinion of the present school, I can only give it as formed after what was merely a cursory and superficial inspection, as I do not believe that I was in the house above half an hour; but it was and is this: that the house at Casterton seemed thoroughly healthy and well kept, and is situated in a lovely spot; that the pupils looked bright, happy, and well, and that the lady superintendent was a most prepossessing-looking person, who, on my making some inquiry as to the accomplishments taught to the pupils, said that the scheme of

education was materially changed since the school had been opened. I would have inserted this testimony in the first edition, had I believed that any weight could be attached to an opinion formed on such slight and superficial grounds.—*Note by Mrs. Gaskell.*

There was much controversy respecting Mrs. Gaskell's identification of Cowan Bridge with the Lowood of *Jane Eyre*. The matter was discussed at infinite length in the Yorkshire papers, even Mr. A. B. Nicholls, Charlotte Brontë's husband, contributing two letters to the *Halifax Guardian* in defence of his wife's general accuracy. A pamphlet also was published with the following title-page:—

A Vindication of the Clergy Daughters' School and the Rev. W. Carus Wilson from the Remarks in 'The Life of Charlotte Brontë,' by the Rev. H. Shepheard, M.A. London: Seeley, Jackson, and Halliday. 1857.

This pamphlet contained the following letter from 'A. H.,' who was a teacher at Cowan Bridge during the time of the residence of the little Brontës there:—

'In July 1824 the Rev. Mr. Brontë arrived at Cowan Bridge with two of his daughters, Maria and Elizabeth, 12 and 10 years of age. The children were delicate; both had but recently recovered from the measles and hooping-cough—so recently, indeed, that doubts were entertained whether they could be admitted with safety to the other pupils. They were received, however, and went on so well that in September their father returned, bringing with him two more of his children—Charlotte, 9 [she was really but 8], and Emily, 6 years of age. During both these visits Mr. Brontë lodged at the school, sat at the same table with the children, saw the whole routine of the establishment, and, so far as I have ever known, was satisfied with everything that came under his observation.

'"*The two younger children enjoyed uniformly good health.*" Charlotte was a general favourite. To the best of my recollection she was never under disgrace, however slight; punishment she certainly did *not* experience while she was at Cowan Bridge.

'In size Charlotte was remarkably diminutive; and if, as has been recently asserted, she never grew an inch after leaving the Clergy Daughters' School, she must have been a *literal dwarf*, and could not have obtained a situation as teacher in a school at Brussels, or anywhere else; the idea is absurd. In respect of the treatment of the pupils at Cowan Bridge, I will say that neither Mr. Brontë's daughters nor any other of the children were denied a sufficient quantity of food. Any statement to the contrary is entirely false. The daily dinner consisted of meat, vegetables, and pudding, in abundance; the children were permitted, and expected, to ask for whatever they desired, and were never limited.

'It has been remarked that the food of the school was such that none but starving children could eat it; and in support of this statement reference is made to a certain occasion when the medical attendant was consulted about it. In reply to this let me say that during the spring of 1825 a low fever, although not an alarming one, prevailed in the school, and the managers, naturally anxious to ascertain whether any local cause occasioned the epidemic, took an opportunity to ask the physician's opinion of the food that happened to be then on the table. I recollect that he spoke rather scornfully of a baked rice pudding; but as the ingredients of this dish were chiefly rice, sugar, and milk, its effects could hardly have been so serious as has been affirmed. I thus furnish you with the simple fact from which those statements have been manufactured.

'I have not the least hesitation in saying that, upon the whole, the comforts were as many and the privations as few at Cowan Bridge as can well be found in so large an establishment. How far young or delicate children are able to contend with the necessary evils of a public school is, in my opinion, a very grave question, and does not enter into the present discussion.

'The younger children in all larger institutions are liable to be oppressed; but the exposure to this evil at Cowan Bridge was not more than in other schools, but, as I believe, far less. Then, again, thoughtless servants will occasionally spoil food, even in private families; and in public schools they are likely to be still less particular, unless they are well looked after.'

A book published by Mr. Carus Wilson in 1831, six years after the little Brontës had left the school, serves to throw an interesting light on the retentiveness of Charlotte Brontë's memory of the place and of her capacity for making every detail serve. The book is entitled:—

Memoir of a Beloved and Long Afflicted Sister, by William Carus Wilson, M.A., Rector of Whittington and Chaplain to his Royal Highness the Duke of Suffolk. Kirkby Lonsdale: Printed and sold by A. Foster. Sold in London by L. B. Seeley and Sons. 1831.

Here we have, day by day, the trivial diary of an invalid woman, and we learn, incidentally, that one of her brothers bore the name of Edward, and that in 1824, during the Brontë sojourn at Cowan Bridge, he became engaged and married to a 'Jane ——.' As there are no Edwards and Janes mentioned in Charlotte Brontë's correspondence, it is fair to suppose that the hint for the Christian names of her hero and heroine in *Jane Eyre* was derived from this early memory. There is also a Mrs. Reade mentioned in the diary, probably a further suggestion. There are many prayerful references to the inquiry into the school management, and his sister hopes that 'dear William' may 'speak in such a manner as may confound his enemies and redound to the glory of God.'

CHAPTER V

For the reason just stated, the little girls were sent home in the autumn of 1825, when Charlotte was little more than nine years old.

About this time an elderly woman of the village came to live as servant at the parsonage. She remained there, as a member of the household, for thirty years; and from the length of her faithful service, and the attachment and respect which she inspired, is deserving of mention. Tabby was a thorough specimen of a Yorkshire woman of her class, in dialect, in appearance, and in character. She abounded in strong practical sense and shrewdness. Her words were far from flattery; but she would spare no deeds in the cause of those whom she kindly regarded. She ruled the children pretty sharply; and yet never grudged a little extra trouble to provide them with such small treats as came within her power. In return, she claimed to be looked upon as a humble friend; and, many years later, Miss Brontë told me that she found it somewhat difficult to manage, as Tabby expected to be informed of all the family concerns, and yet had grown so deaf that what was repeated to her became known to whoever might be in or about the house. To obviate this publication of what it might be desirable to keep secret, Miss Brontë used to take her out for a walk on the solitary moors, where, when both were seated on a tuft of heather, in some high lonely place, she could acquaint the old woman, at leisure, with all that she wanted to hear.

Tabby had lived in Haworth in the days when the pack-horses went through once a week, with their tinkling bells and gay worsted adornment, carrying the produce of the

country from Keighley over the hills to Colne and Burnley. What is more, she had known the 'bottom,' or valley, in those primitive days when the fairies frequented the margin of the 'beck' on moonlight nights, and had known folk who had seen them. But that was when there were no mills in the valleys, and when all the wool-spinning was done by hand in the farmhouses round. 'It wur the factories as had driven 'em away,' she said. No doubt she had many a tale to tell of bygone days of the country-side; old ways of living, former inhabitants, decayed gentry, who had melted away, and whose places knew them no more; family tragedies and dark superstitious dooms; and in telling these things, without the least consciousness that there might ever be anything requiring to be softened down, would give at full length the bare and simple details.

Miss Branwell instructed the children at regular hours in all she could teach, converting her bedchamber into their schoolroom. Their father was in the habit of relating to them any public news in which he felt an interest; and from the opinions of his strong and independent mind they would gather much food for thought; but I do not know whether he gave them any direct instruction. Charlotte's deep, thoughtful spirit appears to have felt almost painfully the tender responsibility which rested upon her with reference to her remaining sisters. She was only eighteen months older than Emily; but Emily and Anne were simply companions and playmates, while Charlotte was motherly friend and guardian to both; and this loving assumption of duties beyond her years made her feel considerably older than she really was.

Patrick Branwell, their only brother, was a boy of remarkable promise, and, in some ways, of extraordinary precocity of talent. Mr. Brontë's friends advised him to send his son to school; but, remembering both the strength of will of his own youth and his mode of employing it, he believed that Patrick was better at home, and that he himself could teach him well, as he had taught others before. So

Patrick—or, as his family called him, Branwell—remained at Haworth, working hard for some hours a day with his father; but, when the time of the latter was taken up with his parochial duties, the boy was thrown into chance companionship with the lads of the village—for youth will to youth, and boys will to boys.

Still, he was associated in many of his sisters' plays and amusements. These were mostly of a sedentary and intellectual nature. I have had a curious packet confided to me, containing an immense amount of manuscript, in an inconceivably small space—tales, dramas, poems, romances, written principally by Charlotte, in a hand which it is almost impossible to decipher without the aid of a magnifying glass.

Among these papers there is a list of her works, which I copy, as a curious proof how early the rage for literary composition had seized upon her :—

'CATALOGUE OF MY BOOKS, WITH THE PERIOD OF THEIR COMPLETION, UP TO AUGUST 3, 1830.

'Two romantic tales in one volume, viz. The Twelve Adventurers and the Adventures in Ireland, April 2, 1829.

'The Search after Happiness, a Tale, August 1, 1829.

'Leisure Hours, a Tale, and two Fragments, July 6, 1829.

'The Adventures of Edward de Crack, a Tale, Feb. 2, 1830.

'The Adventures of Ernest Alembert, a Tale, May 26, 1830.

'An interesting Incident in the Lives of some of the most Eminent Persons of the Age, a Tale, June 10, 1830.

'Tales of the Islanders, in four volumes. Contents of the 1st Vol. :—1. An Account of their Origin; 2. A Description of Vision Island; 3. Ratten's Attempt; 4. Lord Charles Wellesley and the Marquis of Douro's Adventure; completed June 31, 1829. 2nd Vol. :—1. The School Rebellion;

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THE - SECRET

CHAPTER THE 1st

A dead silence had reigned in the Home office of Vardopolis for three hours on the morning of a fine summer's day interrupted only by such sounds as the scraping of a penknife the dripping of a ruler or an occasional cough or whisper & now & then some brief mandate uttered by the noble Secretary in his commanding tones. At length that sublime personage after completing some score or so of despatches addressing a small slight built young gentleman who occupied the chief situation among the clerks said "Mr Rhymer will you be good enough to tell me what o'clock it is" "certainly my lord" was the prompt reply as springing from his seat the ready [illegible] [illegible] bustead of consulting his watch like other people hastened to the window in order to mark the sun's situation, having made his observations he answered 'tis twelve precisely my lord & "Very well" said the marquis "you may all give up then & see that all your desks are locked & that not a scrap of paper is left to litter the office, Mr Rhymer I shall expect you to take care that my directions are fulfilled, so saying he assumed his hat & gloves & with stately [illegible] was approaching the vestibule when a slight bustle & whispering among the clerks arrested his steps. What is the matter asked he turning round "I hope these are not sounds of contention I hear" It said a broad carrotty headed young man of a most pugnacious aspect "but - but, your lordship has forgotten that - that - "That what asked the marquis rather impatiently "Oh! merely that this afternoon is a half-holiday, and, and" I understand" replied his superior smiling "you need not task on your modesty with further explanation Flannagan the truth is I suppose you want your usual largess, & am obliged to you for reminding me, will that do be continued as [illegible] opening his pocket-book he took out a twenty-pound bank bill & laid it on the nearest desk my lord you are too generous" Flannagan hesitated but the chief secretary laughingly laid his gloved hand on his lips & with a condescending nod to the other clerks sprang down the steps of the portico & strode hastily away in order to escape the misy expression of gratitude which now hailed his liberality. On the opposite side of the long & wide street to that on which the splendid Home office stands, rises the no less splendid [illegible] Colonial office. & just as Arthur marquis of Douro left the former structure Edward Stanley Sydney departed from the latter, they met in the centre of the street, Well Ned" said my brother as they shook hands, how are you to day I should think this bright sun & sky ought to enliven you if anything can, why my dear Douro" replied Mr Sydney with a faint smile, "such lovely & genial weather may & I have no doubt does elevate the spirits of the free & healthy, but for me whose mind & body are a continual prey to all the heaviest cares of public & private life it signifies little whether sun chaos or rain dang the atmosphere, "Eudge" replied Arthur his features at the same time assuming that disagreeable expression which my landlord denominates by the term scorney "Now don't begin to bore me Ned with trash of that description I'm tired of it, quite, pray have you neglected that to day is a half-holiday in all departments of the Treasury? "Yes & the circumstance has cost me some money, these silly old customs ought to be abolished in my opinion, they are ruining" "why what have you given the poor Fellows?" "Two sovereigns" an emphatic hem formed Arthurs reply to this communication They had now entered Hotel-street & were proceeding in silence past the line of magnificent shops which it contains, when the sound of wheels was heard behind them & a smooth-smiling chariot dashed up & stopped just where they stood. One of the window glasses now fell a white hand was put out & beckoned them to draw near while a silvery voice said "Mr Sydney marquis of Douro, come hither a moment," both the gentlemen obeyed the summons with alacrity, Sydney with reluctance, What are your commands fair ladies" said the former to the inmates of the carriage who were Lady Julia Sydney and Lady Maria Sneaky, "Our commands are principally for your companion my lord not for you" replied the daughter of Alexander the first, now Mr Sydney she continued smiling in the senator you must promise not to be disobedient" Let me first know what I am required to perform was the cautious answer accompanied by a fearful glance at the shops around "Nothing of much consequence Edward" said his wife "but I hope you'll not refuse to oblige me, this once love I only want a few minutes to make out the price of a pair of earings I have just seen in Mr Lapis's Shop" Not a bit of it" answered he "Not a farthing will I give you it is scarce three weeks since you received your quarters allowance & if that is done already you may suffer for it with this decisive reply he instinctively thrust his hands into his breeches pocket, & marched off with a hurried step. "Stingy little Munkey" exclaimed Lady Julia sinking back in the carriage seat while the bright flush of anger & disappointment crimsoned her fair cheek "this is the way he always treats me but I'll make him suffer for it" Do no discompose yourself so much my dear" said her companion "my purse is at your service if you will accept it" "I am sensible of your goodness Maria, but of course I shall not take advantage of it, nor I can do without the earings it is only a fancy thought [illegible] I would rather have them." "my pretty cousin observed the marquis who till now had remained a quiet though much amused spectator of the whole scene "you are certainly one of the most extravagant young ladies I know, [illegible] why what in earth can you possibly want with these trinkets to my knowledge you have at least a dozen different sorts of ear ornaments," "That is true but then these are quite of another kind, they are so pretty & unique that I could not help whishing for them," "Well since your heart is so much set upon the baubles I will see whether my purse can compass their price if you will allow me to accompany you to Mr Lapis's" O! thank you Arthur you are very kind said Lady Julia & both the ladies quickly made room for him as he sprang in & seated himself between them. I think" said Maria Sneaky who has a touch of the romp about her "I think when I marry I'll have just such a husband as you my lord Marquis one who won't deny me a pretty boy when I have a desire to possess it" Will you said Arthur, "I really think the Turks are more sensible people than ourselves" In a few minutes they reached the Jeweller's Shop. Mr Lapis received them with an obsequious [illegible] proceeded to display his glittering Stores. the pendants which had so fascinated lady Julia were in the form of two brilliant little humming birds whose jewelled plumage equalled if not surpassed the bright hues of nature, whilst she was completing her purchase & customer of a different calibre entered, this was a tall woman [illegible] in a rather faded silk dress & large bonnet & a double veil of black lace which as she lifted it on entering the shop discovered a countenance which [illegible] witnessed the vicissitudes of between thirty & forty summers

2. The Strange Incident in the Duke of Wellington's Life; 3. Tale to his Sons; 4. The Marquis of Douro and Lord Charles Wellesley's Tale to his Little King and Queen; completed Dec. 2, 1829. 3rd Vol.:—1. The Duke of Wellington's Adventure in the Cavern; 2. The Duke of Wellington and the Little King's and Queen's Visit to the Horse Guards; completed May 8, 1830. 4th Vol.:—1. The Three Old Washerwomen of Strathfieldsaye; 2. Lord C. Wellesley's Tale to his Brother; completed July 30, 1830.

'Characters of Great Men of the Present Age, Dec. 17, 1829.

'The Young Men's Magazines, in Six Numbers, from August to December, the latter months double number; completed December 12, 1829. General Index to their Contents:—1. A True Story; 2. Causes of the War; 3. A Song; 4. Conversations; 5. A True Story, continued; 6. The Spirit of Cawdor; 7. Interior of a Pothouse, a Poem; 8. The Glass Town, a Song; 9. The Silver Cup, a Tale; 10. The Table and Vase in the Desert, a Song; 11. Conversations; 12. Scene on the Great Bridge; 13. Song of the Ancient Britons; 14. Scene in my Tun, a Tale; 15. An American Tale; 16. Lines written on seeing the Garden of a Genius; 17. The Lay of the Glass Town; 18. The Swiss Artist, a Tale; 19. Lines on the Transfer of this Magazine; 20. On the Same, by a different hand; 21. Chief Genii in Council; 22. Harvest in Spain; 23. The Swiss Artists, continued; 24. Conversations.

'The Poetaster, a Drama, in 2 volumes, July 12, 1830.

'A Book of Rhymes, finished December 17, 1829. Contents:—1. The Beauty of Nature; 2. A Short Poem; 3. Meditations while Journeying in a Canadian Forest; 4. A Song of an Exile; 5. On Seeing the Ruins of the Tower of Babel; 6. *A Thing of Fourteen Lines*; 7. Lines written on the Bank of a River one Fine Summer Evening; 8. Spring, a Song; 9. Autumn, a Song.

'Miscellaneous Poems, finished May 30, 1830. Contents:

1. The Churchyard; 2. Description of the Duke of Wellington's Palace on the Pleasant Banks of the Lusiva; this article is a small prose tale or incident; 3. Pleasure; 4. Lines written on the Summit of a High Mountain of the North of England; 5. Winter; 6. Two Fragments, namely, 1st, The Vision; 2nd, A Short untitled Poem; The Evening Walk, a Poem, June 23, 1830.

'Making in the whole twenty-two volumes.

'C. BRONTË, *August* 3, 1830.'

As each volume contains from sixty to a hundred pages, the amount of the whole seems very great, if we remember that it was all written in about fifteen months. So much for the quantity; the quality strikes me as of singular merit for a girl of thirteen or fourteen. Both as a specimen of her prose style at this time, and also as revealing something of the quiet domestic life led by these children, I take an extract from the introduction to 'Tales of the Islanders,' the title of one of their 'Little Magazines:'—

'June the 31st, 1829.

'The play of the "Islanders" was formed in December 1827, in the following manner: One night, about the time when the cold sleet and stormy fogs of November are succeeded by the snowstorms, and high, piercing night winds of confirmed winter, we were all sitting round the warm blazing kitchen fire, having just concluded a quarrel with Tabby concerning the propriety of lighting a candle, from which she came off victorious, no candle having been produced. A long pause succeeded, which was at last broken by Branwell saying, in a lazy manner, "I don't know what to do." This was echoed by Emily and Anne.

'*Tabby.* "Wha, ya may go t' bed."

'*Branwell.* "I'd rather do anything than that."

'*Charlotte.* "Why are you so glum to-night, Tabby? Oh! suppose we had each an island of our own."

'*Branwell.* "If we had I would choose the Island of Man."

'*Charlotte.* "And I would choose the Isle of Wight."

'*Emily.* "The Isle of Arran for me."

'*Anne.* "And mine shall be Guernsey."

'We then chose who should be chief men in our islands. Branwell chose John Bull, Astley Cooper, and Leigh Hunt; Emily, Walter Scott, Mr. Lockhart, Johnny Lockhart; Anne, Michael Sadler, Lord Bentinck, Sir Henry Halford. I chose the Duke of Wellington and two sons, Christopher North and Co., and Mr. Abernethy. Here our conversation was interrupted by the, to us, dismal sound of the clock striking seven, and we were summoned off to bed. The next day we added many others to our list of men, till we got almost all the chief men of the kingdom. After this, for a long time, nothing worth noticing occurred. In June 1828 we erected a school on a fictitious island, which was to contain 1,000 children. The manner of the building was as follows: The Island was fifty miles in circumference, and certainly appeared more like the work of enchantment than anything real,' &c.

Two or three things strike me much in this fragment; one is the graphic vividness with which the time of the year, the hour of the evening, the feeling of cold and darkness outside, the sound of the night winds sweeping over the desolate snow-covered moors, coming nearer and nearer, and at last shaking the very door of the room where they were sitting—for it opened out directly on that bleak, wide expanse—is contrasted with the glow and busy brightness of the cheerful kitchen where these remarkable children are grouped. Tabby moves about in her quaint country dress, frugal, peremptory, prone to find fault pretty sharply, yet allowing no one else to blame her children, we may feel sure. Another noticeable fact is the intelligent partisanship with which they choose their great men, who are almost all staunch Tories of the time. Moreover they do not confine themselves to local heroes; their range of choice has been

widened by hearing much of what is not usually considered to interest children. Little Anne, aged scarcely eight, picks out the politicians of the day for her chief men.

There is another scrap of paper, in this all but illegible handwriting, written about this time, and which gives some idea of the sources of their opinions.

'THE HISTORY OF THE YEAR 1829.

'Once papa lent my sister Maria a book. It was an old geography book; she wrote on its blank leaf, "Papa lent me this book." This book is a hundred and twenty years old; it is at this moment lying before me. While I write this I am in the kitchen of the Parsonage, Haworth; Tabby, the servant, is washing up the breakfast things, and Anne, my younger sister (Maria was my eldest), is kneeling on a chair, looking at some cakes which Tabby had been baking for us. Emily is in the parlour, brushing the carpet. Papa and Branwell are gone to Keighley. Aunt is upstairs in her room, and I am sitting by the table writing this in the kitchen. Keighley is a small town four miles from here. Papa and Branwell are gone for the newspaper, the "Leeds Intelligencer," a most excellent Tory newspaper, edited by Mr. Wood, and the proprietor, Mr. Henneman. We take two and see three newspapers a week. We take the "Leeds Intelligencer," Tory, and the "Leeds Mercury," Whig, edited by Mr. Baines, and his brother, son-in-law, and his two sons, Edward and Talbot. We see the "John Bull;" it is a high Tory, very violent. Dr. Driver lends us it, as likewise "Blackwood's Magazine," the most able periodical there is. The editor is Mr. Christopher North, an old man seventy-four years of age; the 1st of April is his birthday; his company are Timothy Tickler, Morgan O'Doherty, Macrabin Mordecai, Mullion, Warnell, and James Hogg, a man of most extraordinary genius, a Scottish shepherd. Our plays were established: "Young Men," June 1826; "Our Fellows," July 1827; "Islanders," December 1827. These are our

three great plays that are not kept secret. Emily's and my best plays were established December 1, 1827; the others March 1828. Best plays mean secret plays; they are very nice ones. All our plays are very strange ones. Their nature I need not write on paper, for I think I shall always remember them. The "Young Men's" play took its rise from some wooden soldiers Branwell had; "Our Fellows" from "Æsop's Fables;" and the "Islanders" from several events which happened. I will sketch out the origin of our plays more explicitly if I can. First, "Young Men." Papa bought Branwell some wooden soldiers at Leeds; when papa came home it was night, and we were in bed, so next morning Branwell came to our door with a box of soldiers. Emily and I jumped out of bed, and I snatched up one and exclaimed, "This is the Duke of Wellington! This shall be the Duke!" When I had said this Emily likewise took up one and said it should be hers; when Anne came down she said one should be hers. Mine was the prettiest of the whole, and the tallest, and the most perfect in every part. Emily's was a grave-looking fellow, and we called him "Gravey." Anne's was a queer little thing, much like herself, and we called him "Waiting-boy." Branwell chose his and called him "Buonaparte."'[1]

The foregoing extract shows something of the kind of reading in which the little Brontës were interested; but their desire for knowledge must have been excited in many directions, for I find a 'list of painters whose works I wish to see' drawn up by Charlotte when she was scarcely thirteen—

'Guido Reni, Julio Romano, Titian, Raphael, Michael Angelo, Correggio, Annibal Caracci, Leonardo da Vinci, Fra Bartolomeo, Carlo Cignani, Vandyke, Rubens, Bartolomeo Ramerghi.'

Here is this little girl, in a remote Yorkshire parsonage, who

[1] Dated on the original 'March 12, 1829.' Mrs. Gaskell copied the manuscript with two trivial variations.

has probably never seen anything worthy of the name of a painting in her life, studying the names and characteristics of the great old Italian and Flemish masters, whose works she longs to see some time, in the dim future that lies before her! There is a paper remaining which contains minute studies of, and criticisms upon, the engravings in 'Friendship's Offering for 1829,' showing how she had early formed those habits of close observation, and patient analysis of cause and effect, which served so well in after-life as handmaids to her genius.

The way in which Mr. Brontë made his children sympathise with him in his great interest in politics must have done much to lift them above the chances of their minds being limited or tainted by petty local gossip. I take the only other remaining personal fragment out of 'Tales of the Islanders;' it is a sort of apology, contained in the introduction to the second volume, for their not having been continued before; the writers had been for a long time too busy, and latterly too much absorbed in politics.

'Parliament was opened, and the great Catholic question was brought forward, and the Duke's measures were disclosed, and all was slander, violence, party spirit, and confusion. Oh, those six months, from the time of the King's Speech to the end! Nobody could write, think, or speak on any subject but the Catholic question, and the Duke of Wellington, and Mr. Peel. I remember the day when the Intelligence Extraordinary came with Mr. Peel's speech in it, containing the terms on which the Catholics were to be let in! With what eagerness papa tore off the cover, and how we all gathered round him, and with what breathless anxiety we listened, as one by one they were disclosed, and explained, and argued upon so ably, and so well! and then when it was all out, how aunt said that she thought it was excellent, and that the Catholics could do no harm with such good security! I remember also the doubts as to whether it would pass the House of Lords, and the prophecies that it would not; and when the paper came which

was to decide the question, the anxiety was almost dreadful with which we listened to the whole affair: the opening of the doors; the hush; the royal dukes in their robes, and the great Duke in green sash and waistcoat; the rising of all the peeresses when he rose; the reading of his speech—papa saying that his words were like precious gold; and lastly, the majority of one to four (*sic*) in favour of the Bill. But this is a digression,' &c. &c.

This must have been written when she was between thirteen and fourteen.

It will be interesting to some of my readers to know what was the character of her purely imaginative writing at this period. While her description of any real occurrence is, as we have seen, homely, graphic, and forcible, when she gives way to her powers of creation her fancy and her language alike run riot, sometimes to the very borders of apparent delirium. Of this wild, weird writing a single example will suffice. It is a letter to the editor of one of the 'Little Magazines.'

'Sir,—It is well known that the Genii have declared that unless they perform certain arduous duties every year, of a mysterious nature, all the worlds in the firmament will be burnt up, and gathered together in one mighty globe, which will roll in solitary grandeur through the vast wilderness of space, inhabited only by the four high princes of the Genii, till time shall be succeeded by Eternity; and the impudence of this is only to be paralleled by another of their assertions, namely, that by their magic might they can reduce the world to a desert, the purest waters to streams of livid poison, and the clearest lakes to stagnant waters, the pestilential vapours of which shall slay all living creatures, except the blood-thirsty beast of the forest, and the ravenous bird of the rock. But that in the midst of this desolation the palace of the Chief Genii shall rise sparkling in the wilderness, and the horrible howl of their war cry shall spread over the land at morning, at noontide and night; but that they shall have

their annual feast over the bones of the dead, and shall yearly rejoice with the joy of victors. I think, sir, that the horrible wickedness of this needs no remark, and therefore I haste to subscribe myself, &c.

'July 14, 1829.'

It is not unlikely that the foregoing letter may have had some allegorical or political reference, invisible to our eyes, but very clear to the bright little minds for whom it was intended. Politics were evidently their grand interest; the Duke of Wellington their demigod. All that related to him belonged to the heroic age. Did Charlotte want a knight-errant, or a devoted lover, the Marquis of Douro, or Lord Charles Wellesley, came ready to her hand. There is hardly one of her prose writings at this time in which they are not the principal personages, and in which their 'august father' does not appear as a sort of Jupiter Tonans, or Deus ex Machina.

As one evidence how Wellesley haunted her imagination I copy out a few of the titles to her papers in the various magazines.

'"Liffey Castle," a Tale by Lord C. Wellesley.

'"Lines to the River Aragua," by the Marquis of Douro.

'"An Extraordinary Dream," by Lord C. Wellesley.

'"The Green Dwarf, a Tale of the Perfect Tense," by the Lord Charles Albert Florian Wellesley.

'"Strange Events," by Lord C. A. F. Wellesley.'[1]

[1] The packet in which Mrs. Gaskell found these numerous treasures of childhood was returned by her to Mr. Brontë. It was carried by Mr. Nicholls to Ireland after Mr. Brontë's death, and was opened forty years afterwards in response to my inquiry for new material concerning the Brontë children. In *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle* I have printed a list, for the benefit of the curious, of these little books more complete than that given here; but Mrs. Gaskell, with an artist's eye for essentials, has seized upon sufficiently representative material. She does not, however, note the fact that a considerable number of these little books are in the handwriting of Branwell Brontë, and scarcely any of them in the handwriting of Emily and Anne. Charlotte Brontë had doubtless

Life in an isolated village, or a lonely country house, presents many little occurrences which sink into the mind of childhood, there to be brooded over. No other event may have happened, or be likely to happen, for days, to push one of these aside, before it has assumed a vague and mysterious importance. Thus children leading a secluded life are often thoughtful and dreamy: the impressions made upon them by the world without—the unusual sights of earth and sky—the accidental meetings with strange faces and figures (rare occurrences in those out-of-the-way places) —are sometimes magnified by them into things so deeply significant as to be almost supernatural. This peculiarity I perceive very strongly in Charlotte's writings at this time. Indeed, under the circumstances, it is no peculiarity. It has been common to all, from the Chaldean shepherds—'the lonely herdsman stretched on the soft grass through half a summer's day'—the solitary monk—to all whose impressions from without have had time to grow and vivify in the imagination, till they have been received as actual personifications, or supernatural visions, to doubt which would be blasphemy.

To counterbalance this tendency in Charlotte was the strong common sense natural to her, and daily called into exercise by the requirements of her practical life. Her duties were not merely to learn her lessons, to read a certain quantity, to gain certain ideas; she had, besides, to brush rooms, to run errands up and down stairs, to help in the simpler forms of cooking, to be by turns playfellow and monitress to her younger sisters and brother, to make and to mend, and to study economy under her careful aunt. Thus we see that, while her imagination received vivid impressions, her excellent understanding had full power to rectify them before her fancies became realities. On a scrap of paper she has written down the following relation:—

destroyed the similar booklets belonging to her sisters after their death, probably in response to some explicit request on their part that all their private papers should be burnt.

'June 22, 1830, 6 o'clock P.M.
Haworth, near Bradford.

'The following strange occurrence happened on June 22, 1830:—At the time papa was very ill, confined to his bed, and so weak that he could not rise without assistance. Tabby and I were alone in the kitchen, about half-past nine ante-meridian (*sic*). Suddenly we heard a knock at the door; Tabby rose and opened it. An old man appeared, standing without, who accosted her thus:

'*Old Man.* "Does the parson live here?"

'*Tabby.* "Yes."

'*Old Man.* "I wish to see him."

'*Tabby.* "He is poorly in bed."

'*Old Man.* "I have a message for him."

'*Tabby.* "Who from?"

'*Old Man.* "From the Lord."

'*Tabby.* "*Who?*"

'*Old Man.* "The Lord. He desires me to say that the Bridegroom is coming, and that we must prepare to meet Him; that the cords are about to be loosed, and the golden bowl broken; the pitcher broken at the fountain."

'Here he concluded his discourse, and abruptly went his way. As Tabby closed the door I asked her if she knew him. Her reply was that she had never seen him before, nor any one like him. Though I am fully persuaded that he was some fanatical enthusiast, well-meaning perhaps, but utterly ignorant of true piety, yet I could not forbear weeping at his words, spoken so unexpectedly at that particular period.'

Though the date of the following poem is a little uncertain, it may be most convenient to introduce it here. It must have been written before 1833, but how much earlier there are no means of determining. I give it as a specimen of the remarkable poetical talent shown in the various diminutive writings of this time, at least in all of them which I have been able to read:—

THE WOUNDED STAG.

Passing amid the deepest shade
Of the wood's sombre heart,
Last night I saw a wounded deer
Laid lonely and apart.

Such light as pierced the crowded boughs
(Light scattered, scant, and dim)
Passed through the fern that formed his couch,
And centred full on him.

Pain trembled in his weary limbs,
Pain filled his patient eye;
Pain-crushed amid the shadowy fern
His branchy crown did lie.

Where were his comrades? where his mate?
All from his death bed gone!
And he, thus struck and desolate,
Suffered and bled alone.

Did he feel what a man might feel,
Friend-left and sore distrest?
Did Pain's keen dart, and Grief's sharp sting
Strive in his mangled breast?

Did longing for affection lost
Barb every deadly dart;
Love unrepaid, and Faith betrayed,
Did these torment his heart?

No! leave to man his proper doom!
These are the pangs that rise
Around the bed of state and gloom,
Where Adam's offspring dies!

CHAPTER VI

THIS is perhaps a fitting time to give some personal description of Miss Brontë. In 1831 she was a quiet, thoughtful girl, of nearly fifteen years of age, very small in figure—'stunted' was the word she applied to herself—but, as her limbs and head were in just proportion to the slight, fragile body, no word in ever so slight a degree suggestive of deformity could properly be applied to her; with soft, thick brown hair, and peculiar eyes, of which I find it difficult to give a description, as they appeared to me in her later life. They were large and well shaped; their colour a reddish brown; but if the iris was closely examined it appeared to be composed of a great variety of tints. The usual expression was of quiet, listening intelligence; but now and then, on some just occasion for vivid interest or wholesome indignation, a light would shine out, as if some spiritual lamp had been kindled, which glowed behind those expressive orbs. I never saw the like in any other human creature. As for the rest of her features, they were plain, large, and ill set; but, unless you began to catalogue them, you were hardly aware of the fact, for the eyes and power of the countenance overbalanced every physical defect; the crooked mouth and the large nose were forgotten, and the whole face arrested the attention, and presently attracted all those whom she herself would have cared to attract. Her hands and feet were the smallest I ever saw; when one of the former was placed in mine, it was like the soft touch of a bird in the middle of my palm. The delicate long fingers had a peculiar fineness of sensation, which was one reason why all her handiwork, of whatever kind—writing, sewing,

knitting—was so clear in its minuteness. She was remarkably neat in her whole personal attire; but she was dainty as to the fit of her shoes and gloves. . . . .

I can well imagine that the grave, serious composure which, when I knew her, gave her face the dignity of an old Venetian portrait, was no acquisition of later years, but dated from that early age when she found herself in the position of an elder sister to motherless children. But in a girl only just entered on her teens such an expression would be called (to use a country phrase) 'old-fashioned;' and in 1831, the period of which I now write, we must think of her as a little, set, antiquated girl, very quiet in manners, and very quaint in dress; for besides the influence exerted by her father's ideas concerning the simplicity of attire befitting the wife and daughters of a country clergyman, her aunt, on whom the duty of dressing her nieces principally devolved, had never been in society since she left Penzance, eight or nine years before, and the Penzance fashions of that day were still dear to her heart.

In January 1831 Charlotte was sent to school again. This time she went as a pupil to Miss W——,[1] who lived at Roe Head, a cheerful, roomy country house, standing a little apart in a field, on the right of the road from Leeds to Huddersfield. Three tiers of old-fashioned semicircular bow windows run from basement to roof; and look down upon

[1] In the first and second editions Mrs. Gaskell printed the name in full, 'Miss Wooler.' But it would seem clear that Miss Wooler had disliked the introduction of herself by name into the biography, and it became 'Miss W——' in later editions. As, however, she afterwards handed her letters from Charlotte to a friend for publication, she must have outlived this feeling of reticence. Margaret Wooler (1792–1885) was the eldest of a large family. She was assisted at different times by her three sisters, Susan, Katherine, and Eliza, in her schools at Roe Head and Dewsbury Moor. Susan Wooler became the wife of the Rev. E. N. Carter, vicar of Heckmondwike, who prepared Charlotte Brontë for confirmation when he was a curate at Mirfield Parish Church. After Margaret Wooler had given up school-keeping she lived first at Heckmondwike with her sister

a long green slope of pasture land, ending in the pleasant woods of Kirklees, Sir George Armitage's park. Although Roe Head and Haworth are not twenty miles apart, the aspect of the country is as totally dissimilar as if they enjoyed a different climate. The soft, curving and heaving landscape round the former gives a stranger the idea of cheerful airiness on the heights, and of sunny warmth in the broad green valleys below. It is just such a neighbourhood as the monks loved, and traces of the old Plantagenet times are to be met with everywhere, side by side with the manufacturing interests of the West Riding of to-day. There is the park of Kirklees, full of sunny glades, speckled with black shadows of immemorial yew trees; the grey pile of building, formerly a 'House of professed Ladies;' the mouldering stone in the depth of the wood, under which Robin Hood is said to lie; close outside the park, an old stone-gabled house, now a roadside inn, but which bears the name of the 'Three Nuns,' and has a picture sign to correspond. And this quaint old inn is frequented by fustian-dressed mill-hands from the neighbouring worsted factories, which strew the highroad from Leeds to Huddersfield, and form the centres round which future villages gather. Such are the contrasts of modes of living, and of times and seasons, brought before the traveller on the great roads that traverse the West Riding. In no other part of England, I fancy, are the centuries brought into such close, strange contact as in the district in which Roe Head is situated. Within six miles of Miss Wooler's house —on the left of the road, coming from Leeds—lie the remains of Howley Hall, now the property of Lord

Susan (Mrs. Carter), and afterwards at Gomersal, near Leeds, where she died at the age of ninety-two. She was described by a pupil as 'short and stout, but graceful in her movements, very fluent in conversation, and with a very sweet voice.' She was buried in Birstall churchyard, where her epitaph runs as follows:—'Margaret Wooler. Born June 10, 1792. Died June 3, 1885. "*By Thy Cross and Passion, good Lord, deliver us.*"'

ROE HEAD.

Cardigan, but formerly belonging to a branch of the Saviles. Near to it is Lady Anne's Well; 'Lady Anne,' according to tradition, having been worried and eaten by wolves as she sat at the well, to which the indigo-dyed factory people from Birstall and Batley woollen mills would formerly repair on Palm Sunday, when the waters possess remarkable medicinal efficacy; and it is still believed by some that they assume a strange variety of colours at six o'clock on the morning of that day.

All round the lands held by the farmer who lives in the remains of Howley Hall are stone houses of to-day, occupied by the people who are making their living and their fortunes by the woollen mills that encroach upon and shoulder out the proprietors of the ancient halls. These are to be seen in every direction, picturesque, many-gabled, with heavy stone carvings of coats of arms for heraldic ornament; belonging to decayed families, from whose ancestral lands field after field has been shorn away, by the urgency of rich manufacturers pressing hard upon necessity.

A smoky atmosphere surrounds these old dwellings of former Yorkshire squires, and blights and blackens the ancient trees that overshadow them; cinder paths lead up to them; the ground round about is sold for building upon; but still the neighbours, though they subsist by a different state of things, remember that their forefathers lived in agricultural dependence upon the owners of these halls, and treasure up the traditions connected with the stately households that existed centuries ago. Take Oakwell Hall, for instance. It stands in a pasture field, about a quarter of a mile from the highroad. It is but that distance from the busy whirr of steam engines employed in the woollen mills at Birstall; and if you walk to it from Birstall Station about meal-time you encounter strings of mill hands, blue with woollen dye, and cranching in hungry haste over the cinder paths bordering the highroad. Turning off from this to the right, you ascend through an old pasture field, and enter a short by-road, called the 'Bloody Lane'—a walk haunted by

the ghost of a certain Captain Batt, the reprobate proprietor of an old hall close by, in the days of the Stuarts. From the 'Bloody Lane,' overshadowed by trees, you come into the field in which Oakwell Hall is situated. It is known in the neighbourhood to be the place described as 'Field Head,' Shirley's residence. The enclosure in front, half court, half garden; the panelled hall, with the gallery opening into the bedchambers running round; the barbarous peach-coloured drawing-room; the bright look-out through the garden door upon the grassy lawns and terraces behind, where the soft-hued pigeons still love to coo and strut in the sun—are described in 'Shirley.' The scenery of that fiction lies close around; the real events which suggested it took place in the immediate neighbourhood.

They show a bloody footprint in a bedchamber of Oakwell Hall, and tell a story connected with it, and with the lane by which the house is approached. Captain Batt was believed to be far away; his family was at Oakwell; when in the dusk, one winter evening, he came stalking along the lane, and through the hall, and up the stairs, into his own room, where he vanished. He had been killed in a duel in London that very same afternoon of December 9, 1684.[1]

The stones of the Hall formed part of the more ancient vicarage, which an ancestor of Captain Batt had seized in the troublous times for property which succeeded the Reformation. This Henry Batt possessed himself of houses and money without scruple, and at last stole the great bell of Birstall Church, for which sacrilegious theft a fine was imposed on the land, and has to be paid by the owner of the Hall to this day.

But the Oakwell property passed out of the hands of the Batts at the beginning of the last century; collateral descendants succeeded, and left this picturesque trace of their having been. In the great hall hangs a mighty pair of

[1] Oliver Heywood in his Northowram Register has this entry: 1684, 'Mr. Bat of Okewell, a young man, slain by Mr. Gream at Barne(t), near London; buried at Birstall, Dec. 30.'

stag's horns, and dependent from them a printed card, recording the fact that, on September 1, 1763, there was a great hunting match, when this stag was slain; and that fourteen gentlemen shared in the chase, and dined on the spoil in that hall, along with Fairfax Fearneley, Esq., the owner. The fourteen names are given, doubtless 'mighty men of yore;' but, among them all, Sir Fletcher Norton, Attorney-General, and Major-General Birch were the only ones with which I had any association in 1855. Passing on from Oakwell there lie houses right and left, which were well known to Miss Brontë, when she lived at Roe Head, as the hospitable homes of some of her schoolfellows. Lanes branch off for three or four miles to heaths and commons on the higher ground, which formed pleasant walks on holidays, and then comes the white gate into the field path leading to Roe Head itself.

One of the bow-windowed rooms on the ground floor, with the pleasant look-out I have described, was the drawing-room; the other was the schoolroom. The dining-room was on one side of the door, and faced the road.

The number of pupils, during the year and a half Miss Brontë was there, ranged from seven to ten; and as they did not require the whole of the house for their accommodation, the third story was unoccupied, except by the ghostly idea of a lady, whose rustling silk gown was sometimes heard by the listeners at the foot of the second flight of stairs.

The kind, motherly nature of Miss Wooler and the small number of the girls made the establishment more like a private family than a school. Moreover she was a native of the district immediately surrounding Roe Head, as were the majority of her pupils. Most likely Charlotte Brontë, in coming from Haworth, came the greatest distance of all. 'E.'s' home[1] was five miles away; two other dear friends

[1] 'E.' was Ellen Nussey (1817–97), a girl of fourteen when she first met Charlotte Brontë. Her home was at this time and until 1837 at The Rydings, Birstall, Yorks. From 1837 until long after Charlotte

(the Rose and Jessie Yorke of 'Shirley') lived still nearer; two or three came from Huddersfield; one or two from Leeds.

I shall now quote from a valuable letter which I have received from 'Mary,'[1] one of these early friends; distinct and graphic in expression, as becomes a cherished associate of Charlotte Brontë. The time referred to is her first appearance at Roe Head, on January 19, 1831.

'I first saw her coming out of a covered cart, in very old-fashioned clothes, and looking very cold and miserable. She was coming to school at Miss Wooler's. When she

Brontë's death she lived at Brookroyd, in the same district. The Rydings served in part for 'Thornfield' in *Jane Eyre*. Charlotte Brontë's friendship for Miss Nussey was enthusiastic and based upon gratitude for many kindnesses. Miss Nussey was probably from the first an ardent hero-worshipper of her more gifted friend—her senior by a year. In the period that succeeded Charlotte Brontë's death this hero-worship became little less than idolatry, and Miss Nussey in her later years received numerous visitors who were anxious to learn something of the Brontë sisters. To these visitors she was always ready to give courteous consideration, although she was able to add but little to the information which in the days when memory was most acute she had imparted to Mrs. Gaskell. She, however, inspired Sir Wemyss Reid, as has been stated, to write twenty years later his *Charlotte Brontë: a Monograph*. Miss Brontë denied, however—to her husband, Mr. Nicholls—that she had intended Caroline Helstone as a presentation of her friend. The whole collection of Charlotte Brontë's letters to Ellen Nussey was privately printed by Mr. J. Horsfall Turner, of Idle, Yorks, apparently under the misapprehension that the letters written to a person are the owner's property for publication, which legally they are not. These letters were reprinted, in almost complete form, by permission of Mr. Nicholls, Miss Brontë's husband and executor, in *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle*. Mrs. Gaskell had seen the correspondence, and made her selection with absolute discernment of essentials. The original letters, most of which are now the property of Mr. Thomas Wise, of London, are valuable for the identification of names, which were necessarily omitted by Mrs. Gaskell at a time when many of the people referred to were still alive. Miss Nussey died at Birstall, Yorkshire, and was buried in Birstall churchyard, where her tomb is inscribed, 'Ellen Nussey, youngest daughter of the above-named John Nussey, who died November 26, 1897, aged 80 years.'

[1] Mary Taylor, the Rose Yorke of *Shirley*. See p. 105.

appeared in the schoolroom her dress was changed, but just as old. She looked a little old woman, so short-sighted that she always appeared to be seeking something, and moving her head from side to side to catch a sight of it. She was very shy and nervous, and spoke with a strong Irish accent. When a book was given her she dropped her head over it till her nose nearly touched it, and when she was told to hold her head up, up went the book after it, still close to her nose, so that it was not possible to help laughing.'

This was the first impression she made upon one of those whose dear and valued friend she was to become in after-life. Another of the girls recalls her first sight of Charlotte, on the day she came, standing by the schoolroom window, looking out on the snowy landscape, and crying, while all the rest were at play. 'E.' was younger than she, and her tender heart was touched by the apparently desolate condition in which she found the oddly dressed, odd-looking little girl that winter morning, as 'sick for home she stood in tears,' in a new strange place, among new strange people. Any over-demonstrative kindness would have scared the wild little maiden from Haworth; but 'E.' (who is shadowed forth in the Caroline Helstone of 'Shirley') managed to win confidence, and was allowed to give sympathy.

To quote again from 'Mary's' letter—

'We thought her very ignorant, for she had never learnt grammar at all, and very little geography.'

This account of her partial ignorance is confirmed by her other schoolfellows. But Miss Wooler was a lady of remarkable intelligence and of delicate, tender sympathy. She gave a proof of this in her first treatment of Charlotte. The little girl was well read, but not well grounded. Miss Wooler took her aside and told her she was afraid that she must place her in the second class for some time, till she could overtake the girls of her own age in the knowledge of grammar, &c.; but poor Charlotte received this announcement with so sad a fit of crying that Miss Wooler's kind heart was softened, and she wisely perceived that, with such

a girl, it would be better to place her in the first class, and allow her to make up by private study in those branches where she was deficient.

'She would confound us by knowing things that were out of our range altogether. She was acquainted with most of the short pieces of poetry that we had to learn by heart; would tell us the authors, the poems they were taken from, and sometimes repeat a page or two, and tell us the plot. She had a habit of writing in italics (printing characters), and said she had learnt it by writing in their magazine. They brought out a "magazine" once a month, and wished it to look as like print as possible. She told us a tale out of it. No one wrote in it, and no one read it, but herself, her brother, and two sisters. She promised to show me some of these magazines, but retracted it afterwards, and would never be persuaded to do so. In our play hours she sat or stood still, with a book, if possible. Some of us once urged her to be on our side in a game at ball. She said she had never played, and could not play. We made her try, but soon found that she could not see the ball, so we put her out. She took all our proceedings with pliable indifference, and always seemed to need a previous resolution to say "No" to anything. She used to go and stand under the trees in the playground, and say it was pleasanter. She endeavoured to explain this, pointing out the shadows, the peeps of sky, &c. We understood but little of it. She said that at Cowan Bridge she used to stand in the burn, on a stone, to watch the water flow by. I told her she should have gone fishing; she said she never wanted. She always showed physical feebleness in everything. She ate no animal food at school. It was about this time I told her she was very ugly. Some years afterwards I told her I thought I had been very impertinent. She replied, "You did me a great deal of good, Polly, so don't repent of it." She used to draw much better, and more quickly, than anything we had seen before, and knew much about celebrated pictures and painters. Whenever an opportunity offered of examin-

ing a picture or cut of any kind, she went over it piecemeal, with her eyes close to the paper, looking so long that we used to ask her "what she saw in it." She could always see plenty, and explained it very well. She made poetry and drawing at least exceedingly interesting to me; and then I got the habit, which I have yet, of referring mentally to her opinion on all matters of that kind, along with many more, resolving to describe such and such things to her, until I start at the recollection that I never shall.'

To feel the full force of this last sentence—to show how steady and vivid was the impression which Miss Brontë made on those fitted to appreciate her—I must mention that the writer of this letter, dated January 18, 1856, in which she thus speaks of constantly referring to Charlotte's opinion, has never seen her for eleven years, nearly all of which have been passed among strange scenes, in a new continent, at the antipodes.

'We used to be furious politicians, as one could hardly help being in 1832. She knew the names of the two Ministries; the one that resigned, and the one that succeeded and passed the Reform Bill. She worshipped the Duke of Wellington, but said that Sir Robert Peel was not to be trusted; he did not act from principle, like the rest, but from expediency. I, being of the furious Radical party, told her, "How could any of them trust one another? they were all of them rascals!" Then she would launch out into praises of the Duke of Wellington, referring to his actions; which I could not contradict, as I knew nothing about him. She said she had taken interest in politics ever since she was five years old. She did not get her opinions from her father—that is, not directly—but from the papers, &c., he preferred.'

In illustration of the truth of this I may give an extract from a letter to her brother, written from Roe Head, May 17, 1832:—'Lately I had begun to think that I had lost all the interest which I used formerly to take in politics; but the extreme pleasure I felt at the news of the Reform Bill's being thrown out by the House of Lords, and of the expulsion, or

resignation, of Earl Grey, &c., convinced me that I have not as yet lost all my *penchant* for politics. I am extremely glad that aunt has consented to take in "Fraser's Magazine;" for, though I know, from your description of its general contents, it will be rather uninteresting when compared with "Blackwood," still it will be better than remaining the whole year without being able to obtain a sight of any periodical whatever; and such would assuredly be our case, as, in the little wild moorland village where we reside, there would be no possibility of borrowing a work of that description from a circulating library. I hope with you that the present delightful weather may contribute to the perfect restoration of our dear papa's health; and that it may give aunt pleasant reminiscences of the salubrious climate of her native place,' &c.[1]

To return to 'Mary's' letter—

'She used to speak of her two elder sisters, Maria and Elizabeth, who died at Cowan Bridge. I used to believe them to have been wonders of talent and kindness. She told me, early one morning, that she had just been dreaming: she had been told that she was wanted in the drawing-room, and it was Maria and Elizabeth. I was eager for her to go on, and when she said there was no more, I said, "But go on! *Make it out!* I know you can." She said she would not; she wished she had not dreamed, for it did not go on nicely; they were changed; they had forgotten what they

[1] This letter commenced as follows:—

'Dear Branwell,—As usual I address my weekly letter to you, because to you I find the most to say. I feel exceedingly anxious to know how and in what state you arrived at home after your long and (I should think) very fatiguing journey. I could perceive when you arrived at Roe Head that you were very much tired, though you refused to acknowledge it. After you were gone many questions and subjects of conversation recurred to me which I had intended to mention to you, but quite forgot them in the agitation which I felt at the totally unexpected pleasure of seeing you.' And it ended, 'With love to all, believe me, dear Branwell, to remain your affectionate sister,

'CHARLOTTE.'

used to care for. They were very fashionably dressed, and began criticising the room, &c.

'This habit of "making out" interests for themselves, that most children get who have none in actual life, was very strong in her. The whole family used to "make out" histories, and invent characters and events. I told her sometimes they were like growing potatoes in a cellar. She said, sadly, "Yes! I know we are!"

'Some one at school said she "was always talking about clever people—Johnson, Sheridan," &c. She said, "Now you don't know the meaning of *clever*. Sheridan might be clever; yes, Sheridan was clever—scamps often are—but Johnson hadn't a spark of cleverality in him." No one appreciated the opinion; they made some trivial remark about "*cleverality*," and she said no more.

'This is the epitome of her life. At our house she had just as little chance of a patient hearing, for though not school-girlish we were more intolerant. We had a rage for practicality, and laughed all poetry to scorn. Neither she nor we had any idea but that our opinions were the opinions of all the *sensible* people in the world, and we used to astonish each other at every sentence. . . . Charlotte, at school, had no plan of life beyond what circumstances made for her. She knew that she must provide for herself, and chose her trade; at least chose to begin it once. Her idea of self-improvement ruled her even at school. It was to cultivate her tastes. She always said there was enough of hard practicality and *useful* knowledge forced on us by necessity, and that the thing most needed was to soften and refine our minds. She picked up every scrap of information concerning painting, sculpture, poetry, music, &c., as if it were gold.'

What I have heard of her school days from other sources confirms the accuracy of the details in this remarkable letter.[1]

[1] This letter, which Mrs. Gaskell calls 'remarkable,' was written by a remarkable woman. Mary Taylor (1817–1893), the Rose Yorke of *Shirley*, who is referred to by Mrs. Gaskell as 'Mary,' was with her sister

She was an indefatigable student: constantly reading and learning; with a strong conviction of the necessity and value of education, very unusual in a girl of fifteen. She never lost a moment of time, and seemed almost to grudge the necessary leisure for relaxation and play hours, which might be partly accounted for by the awkwardness in all games occasioned by her shortness of sight. Yet, in spite of these unsociable habits, she was a great favourite with her schoolfellows. She was always ready to try and do what they wished, though not sorry when they called her awkward and left her out of their sports. Then, at night, she was an invaluable story-teller, frightening them almost out of their wits as they lay in bed. On one occasion the effect was such that she was led to scream out aloud, and Miss Wooler, coming upstairs, found that one of the listeners had been seized with violent palpitations in consequence of the excitement produced by Charlotte's story.

Her indefatigable craving for knowledge tempted Miss Wooler on into setting her longer and longer tasks of reading

Martha—the Jessie Yorke of *Shirley*—at Roe Head with Charlotte Brontë. She received much additional education at Brussels, where Martha died and was buried in the Protestant cemetery. Reverses coming to her family—whose characteristics ran much upon the same lines as those of the Yorkes of *Shirley*—Mary Taylor emigrated to Wellington, New Zealand, where she started a small drapery store. This and other letters to Mrs. Gaskell are written from Wellington. All her letters show remarkable intellectual powers, and indeed it would not be too much to say that until Miss Brontë attained to literary fame Mary Taylor was the only human being of a high order of intelligence with whom she had come in contact apart from her own family circle. Miss Taylor's two books, however, published upon her return to England, had no special significance. One of them, *Miss Miles: a Tale of Yorkshire Life Sixty Years Ago*, was published so late as 1890, while *The First Duty of Women: a Series of Articles reprinted from the 'Victorian Magazine*, 1865 to 1870,' was published in 1870. The last thirty years of her life were passed in a house built for her by a brother at High Royd, near Gomersal, Yorks, and here she died in March 1893, aged seventy-six. Her tomb in Gomersal churchyard is inscribed, 'In affectionate remembrance of Mary Taylor of High Royd, Gomersal. Born February 26, 1817. Died March 1, 1893.'

for examination; and towards the end of the year and a half that she remained as a pupil at Roe Head she received her first bad mark for an imperfect lesson. She had had a great quantity of Blair's 'Lectures on Belles-Lettres' to read, and she could not answer some of the questions upon it; Charlotte Brontë had a bad mark. Miss Wooler was sorry, and regretted that she had set Charlotte so long a task. Charlotte cried bitterly. But her schoolfellows were more than sorry —they were indignant. They declared that the infliction of ever so slight a punishment on Charlotte Brontë was unjust —for who had tried to do her duty like her?—and testified their feeling in a variety of ways, until Miss Wooler, who was in reality only too willing to pass over her good pupil's first fault, withdrew the bad mark; and the girls all returned to their allegiance except 'Mary,' who took her own way during the week or two that remained of the half-year, choosing to consider that Miss Wooler, in giving Charlotte Brontë so long a task, had forfeited her claim to obedience of the school regulations.

The number of pupils was so small that the attendance to certain subjects at particular hours, common in larger schools, was not rigidly enforced. When the girls were ready with their lessons they came to Miss Wooler to say them. She had a remarkable knack of making them feel interested in whatever they had to learn. They set to their studies, not as to tasks or duties to be got through, but with a healthy desire and thirst for knowledge, of which she had managed to make them perceive the relishing savour. They did not leave off reading and learning as soon as the compulsory pressure of school was taken away. They had been taught to think, to analyse, to reject, to appreciate. Charlotte Brontë was happy in the choice made for her of the second school to which she was sent. There was a robust freedom in the out-of-doors life of her companions. They played at merry games in the fields round the house: on Saturday half-holidays they went long scrambling walks down mysterious shady lanes, then climbing the uplands,

and thus gaining extensive views over the country, about which so much had to be told, both of its past and present history.

Miss Wooler must have had in great perfection the French art 'conter,' to judge from her pupil's recollections of the tales she related during these long walks, of this old house, or that new mill, and of the states of society consequent on the changes involved by the suggestive dates of either building. She remembered the times when watchers or wakeners in the night heard the distant word of command and the measured tramp of thousands of sad, desperate men receiving a surreptitious military training, in preparation for some great day which they saw in their visions, when right should struggle with might and come off victorious; when the people of England, represented by the workers of Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Nottinghamshire, should make their voice heard in a terrible slogan, since their true and pitiful complaints could find no hearing in Parliament. We forget nowadays, so rapid have been the changes for the better, how cruel was the condition of numbers of labourers at the close of the great Peninsular war. The half-ludicrous nature of some of their grievances has lingered on in tradition; the real intensity of their sufferings has become forgotten. They were maddened and desperate; and the country, in the opinion of many, seemed to be on the verge of a precipice, from which it was only saved by the prompt and resolute decision of a few in authority. Miss Wooler spoke of those times; of the mysterious nightly drillings; of thousands on lonely moors; of the muttered threats of individuals too closely pressed upon by necessity to be prudent; of the overt acts, in which the burning of Cartwright's mill took a prominent place; and these things sank deep into the mind of one, at least, among her hearers.

Mr. Cartwright was the owner of a factory called Rawfolds, in Liversedge, not beyond the distance of a walk from Roe Head. He had dared to employ machinery for the dressing of woollen cloth, which was an unpopular measure

in 1812, when many other circumstances conspired to make the condition of the mill-hands unbearable from the pressure of starvation and misery. Mr. Cartwright was a very remarkable man, having, as I have been told, some foreign blood in him, the traces of which were very apparent in his tall figure, dark eyes and complexion, and singular though gentlemanly bearing. At any rate he had been much abroad, and spoke French well, of itself a suspicious circumstance to the bigoted nationality of those days. Altogether he was an unpopular man, even before he took the last step of employing shears,[1] instead of hands, to dress his wool. He was quite aware of his unpopularity, and of the probable consequences. He had his mill prepared for an assault. He took up his lodgings in it; and the doors were strongly barricaded at night. On every step of the stairs there was placed a roller, spiked with barbed points all round, so as to impede the ascent of the rioters, if they succeeded in forcing the doors.

On the night of Saturday, April 11, 1812, the assault was made. Some hundreds of starving cloth-dressers assembled in the very field near Kirklees that sloped down from the house which Miss Wooler afterwards inhabited, and were armed by their leaders with pistols, hatchets, and bludgeons, many of which had been extorted, by the nightly bands that prowled about the country, from such inhabitants of lonely houses as had provided themselves with these means of self-defence. The silent, sullen multitude marched in the dead of that spring night to Rawfolds, and, giving tongue with a great shout, roused Mr. Cartwright up to the knowledge that the long-expected attack was come. He was within walls, it is true; but against the fury of hundreds he had only four of his own workmen and five soldiers to assist him. These ten men, however, managed to keep up such a vigorous and well-directed fire of musketry that they defeated all the

[1] This should have been 'cropping machines;' shears were employed in dressing cloth by hand. Nor was it unspun wool, but cloth, over which the Luddites rioted.

desperate attempts of the multitude outside to break down the doors, and force a way into the mill; and, after a conflict of twenty minutes, during which two of the assailants were killed and several wounded, they withdrew in confusion, leaving Mr. Cartwright master of the field, but so dizzy and exhausted, now the peril was past, that he forgot the nature of his defences, and injured his leg rather seriously by one of the spiked rollers, in attempting to go up his own staircase. His dwelling was near the factory. Some of the rioters vowed that, if he did not give in, they would leave this, and go to his house, and murder his wife and children. This was a terrible threat, for he had been obliged to leave his family with only one or two soldiers to defend them. Mrs. Cartwright knew what they had threatened; and on that dreadful night, hearing, as she thought, steps approaching, she snatched up her two infant children, and put them in a basket up the great chimney, common in old-fashioned Yorkshire houses. One of the two children who had been thus stowed away used to point out with pride, after she had grown up to woman's estate, the marks of musket shot and the traces of gunpowder on the walls of her father's mill. He was the first that had offered any resistance to the progress of the 'Luddites,' who had become by this time so numerous as almost to assume the character of an insurrectionary army. Mr. Cartwright's conduct was so much admired by the neighbouring mill-owners that they entered into a subscription for his benefit, which amounted in the end to 3,000*l.*[1]

Not much more than a fortnight after this attack on Rawfolds, another manufacturer who employed the obnoxious machinery was shot down in broad daylight, as he was passing over Crossland Moor, which was skirted by a small plantation in which the murderers lay hidden. The readers of 'Shirley' will recognise these circumstances,

[1] Cartwright was buried in Liversedge churchyard. The inscription on his tomb runs, 'Wm. Cartwright, of Rawfolds, died April 15, 1839, aged 64 years.'

which were related to Miss Brontë years after they occurred, but on the very spots where they took place, and by persons who remembered full well those terrible times of insecurity to life and property on the one hand, and of bitter starvation and blind, ignorant despair on the other.

Mr. Brontë himself had been living amongst these very people in 1812, as he was then clergyman at Hartshead, not three miles from Rawfolds; and, as I have mentioned, it was in these perilous times that he began his custom of carrying a loaded pistol continually about with him. For not only his Tory politics, but his love and regard for the authority of the law made him despise the cowardice of the surrounding magistrates, who, in their dread of the Luddites, refused to interfere so as to prevent the destruction of property. The clergy of the district were the bravest men by far.

There was a Mr. Roberson, of Heald's Hall, a friend of Mr. Brontë, who has left a deep impression of himself on the public mind. He lived near Heckmondwike, a large, straggling, dirty village, not two miles from Roe Head. It was principally inhabited by blanket weavers, who worked in their own cottages; and Heald's Hall is the largest house in the village, of which Mr. Roberson was the vicar. At his own cost he built a handsome church at Liversedge, on a hill opposite the one on which his house stood, which was the first attempt in the West Riding to meet the wants of the overgrown population, and made many personal sacrifices for his opinions, both religious and political, which were of the true old-fashioned Tory stamp. He hated everything which he fancied had a tendency towards anarchy. He was loyal in every fibre to Church and King; and would have proudly laid down his life, any day, for what he believed to be right and true. But he was a man of an imperial will, and by it he bore down opposition, till tradition represents him as having something grimly demoniac about him. He was intimate with Cartwright, and aware of the attack likely to be made on his mill; accordingly, it is said, he armed

himself and his household, and was prepared to come to the rescue, in the event of a signal being given that aid was needed. Thus far is likely enough. Mr. Roberson had plenty of warlike spirit in him, man of peace though he was.

But, in consequence of his having taken the unpopular side, exaggerations of his character linger as truth in the minds of the people; and a fabulous story is told of his forbidding any one to give water to the wounded Luddites, left in the mill yard, when he rode in the next morning to congratulate his friend Cartwright on his successful defence. Moreover, this stern, fearless clergyman had the soldiers that were sent to defend the neighbourhood billeted at his house; and this deeply displeased the work-people, who were to be intimidated by the red-coats. Although not a magistrate, he spared no pains to track out the Luddites concerned in the assassination I have mentioned; and was so successful in his acute, unflinching energy that it was believed he had been supernaturally aided; and the country people, stealing into the fields surrounding Heald's Hall on dusky winter evenings, years after this time, declared that through the windows they saw Parson Roberson dancing, in a strange red light, with black demons all whirling and eddying round him. He kept a large boys' school, and made himself both respected and dreaded by his pupils. He added a grim kind of humour to his strength of will; and the former quality suggested to his fancy strange, out-of-the-way kinds of punishment for any refractory pupils: for instance, he made them stand on one leg in a corner of the schoolroom, holding a heavy book in each hand; and once, when a boy had run away home, he followed him on horseback, reclaimed him from his parents, and, tying him by a rope to the stirrup of his saddle, made him run alongside of his horse for the many miles they had to traverse before reaching Heald's Hall.

One other illustration of his character may be given. He discovered that his servant Betty had 'a follower;' and,

watching his time till Richard was found in the kitchen, he ordered him into the dining-room, where the pupils were all assembled. He then questioned Richard whether he had come after Betty; and on his confessing the truth, Mr. Roberson gave the word, 'Off with him, lads, to the pump!' The poor lover was dragged to the courtyard, and the pump set to play upon him; and, between every drenching, the question was put to him, 'Will you promise not to come after Betty again?' For a long time Richard bravely refused to give in, when 'Pump again, lads!' was the order. But, at last, the poor soaked 'follower' was forced to yield, and renounce his Betty.[1]

The Yorkshire character of Mr. Roberson would be incomplete if I did not mention his fondness for horses. He lived to be a very old man, dying some time nearer to 1840 than 1830; and even after he was eighty years of age he took great delight in breaking refractory steeds; if necessary, he would sit motionless on their backs for half an hour or more to bring them to. There is a story current that once, in a passion, he shot his wife's favourite horse, and buried it near a quarry, where the ground, some years after, miraculously opened and displayed the skeleton; but the real fact is, that it was an act of humanity to put a poor old horse out of misery; and that, to spare it pain, he shot it with his own hand, and buried it where, the ground sinking afterwards by the working of a coal-pit, the bones came to light. The traditional colouring shows the animus with which his memory is regarded by one set of people. By another, the neighbouring clergy, who remember him riding, in his old age, down the hill on which his house stood, upon his strong white horse—his bearing proud and dignified, his

[1] There is another side to this story, if a tradition, thus recorded by Mr. Erskine Stuart, is to be relied on:—

'Two can play at practical jokes, and the half-drowned swain and a few kindred spirits paid a midnight visit to Roberson's yard, destroyed all the milk pans, and poured their precious contents on the ground as a libation to their god, Revenge.'

shovel hat bent over and shadowing his keen eagle eyes—going to his Sunday duty, like a faithful soldier that dies in harness—who can appreciate his loyalty to conscience, his sacrifices to duty, and his stand by his religion—his memory is venerated. In his extreme old age a rubric meeting was held, at which his clerical brethren gladly subscribed to present him with a testimonial of their deep respect and regard.[1]

This is a specimen of the strong character not seldom manifested by the Yorkshire clergy of the Established Church. Mr. Roberson was a friend of Charlotte Brontë's father; lived within a couple of miles of Roe Head while she was at school there; and was deeply engaged in transactions, the memory of which was yet recent when she heard of them, and of the part which he had had in them.

I may now say a little on the character of the Dissenting population immediately surrounding Roe Head; for the 'Tory and clergyman's daughter,' 'taking interest in politics ever since she was five years old,' and holding frequent discussions with such of the girls as were Dissenters and Radicals, was sure to have made herself as

[1] Hammond Roberson (1757–1841), born at Cawston, Norfolk, was a student of Magdalen College, Cambridge. He was curate of Dewsbury, Yorks, for nine years from 1779. In 1788 he resigned his curacy and took up his residence at Squirrel Hall, Dewsbury Moor. Here he remained and began a successful career as a teacher. In 1795 he purchased Heald's Hall, Liversedge, and shortly afterwards became incumbent of Hartshead-cum-Clifton, resigning in 1800. In 1813 he delivered a sermon—afterwards published—at the laying of the foundation stone of a church at Liversedge, which he was largely instrumental in building. It was completed in 1816. A memorial window to him in Liversedge Church bears the inscription—

'*To the glory of God, and in memory of the Rev. Hammond Roberson, M.A., Founder of this Church in* 1816, *and its first Incumbent, who died 9th August*, 1841, *aged* 84 *years*;'

and his tombstone in the churchyard bears the following inscription:—

'*The Rev. Hammond Roberson, Founder of this Church in* 1816, *died August 9th*, 1841, *aged* 84.'

much acquainted as she could with the condition of those to whom she was opposed in opinion.

The bulk of the population were Dissenters, principally Independents. In the village of Heckmondwike, at one end of which Roe Head is situated,[1] there were two large chapels belonging to that denomination, and one to the Methodists, all of which were well filled two or three times on a Sunday. besides having various prayer meetings, fully attended on weekdays. The inhabitants were a chapel-going people, very critical about the doctrine of their sermons, tyrannical to their ministers, and violent Radicals in politics. A friend, well acquainted with the place when Charlotte Brontë was at school, has described some events which occurred then among them :—

'A scene, which took place at the Lower Chapel at Heckmondwike, will give you some idea of the people at that time. When a newly married couple made their appearance at chapel, it was the custom to sing the Wedding Anthem, just after the last prayer, and as the congregation was quitting the chapel. The band of singers who performed this ceremony expected to have money given them, and often passed the following night in drinking; at least so said the minister of the place; and he determined to put an end to this custom. In this he was supported by many members of the chapel and congregation; but so strong was the democratic element, that he met with the most violent opposition and was often insulted when he went into the street. A bride was expected to make her first appearance, and the minister told the singers not to perform the anthem. On their declaring they would he had the large pew which they usually occupied locked; they broke it open. From the pulpit he told the congregation that, instead of their singing a hymn, he would read a chapter; hardly had he uttered the first word, before up rose the singers, headed by a tall, fierce-looking weaver, who gave out a hymn, and all sang it at the very top of their voices, aided by those of their friends

[1] Roe Head is more than two miles from Heckmondwike.

who were in the chapel. Those who disapproved of the conduct of the singers, and sided with the minister, remained seated till the hymn was finished. Then he gave out the chapter again, read it, and preached. He was just about to conclude with prayer, when up started the singers and screamed forth another hymn. These disgraceful scenes were continued for many weeks, and so violent was the feeling that the different parties could hardly keep from blows as they came through the chapel-yard. The minister, at last, left the place, and along with him went many of the most temperate and respectable part of the congregation, and the singers remained triumphant.

'I believe that there was such a violent contest respecting the choice of a pastor, about this time, in the Upper Chapel at Heckmondwike, that the Riot Act had to be read at a church meeting.' [1]

Certainly, the *soi-disant* Christians who forcibly ejected Mr. Redhead at Haworth ten or twelve years before, held a very heathen brotherhood with the *soi-disant* Christians of Heckmondwike, though the one set might be called members of the Church of England and the other Dissenters.

The letter from which I have taken the above extract relates throughout to the immediate neighbourhood of the place where Charlotte Brontë spent her school-days, and describes things as they existed at that very time. The writer says, 'Having been accustomed to the respectful manners of the lower orders in the agricultural districts, I was, at first, much disgusted and somewhat alarmed at the great freedom displayed by the working classes of Heckmondwike and Gomersal to those in a station above them. The term "lass" was as freely applied to any young lady as the word "wench" is in Lancashire. The extremely untidy appearance of the villagers shocked me not a little, though

[1] This story was very much resented by the Heckmondwike Nonconformists. Mr. J. J. Stead, of Heckmondwike, informs me that the pastor of the Upper Chapel was elected in 1823 by an unanimous vote, and he remained there until his death in 1862.

I must do the housewives the justice to say that the cottages themselves were not dirty, and had an air of rough plenty about them (except when trade was bad), that I had not been accustomed to see in the farming districts. The heap of coals on one side of the house door, and the brewing tubs on the other, and the frequent perfume of malt and hops as you walked along, proved that fire and "home-brewed" were to be found at almost every man's hearth. Nor was hospitality, one of the main virtues of Yorkshire, wanting. Oat cake, cheese, and beer were freely pressed upon the visitor.

'There used to be a yearly festival, half religious, half social, held at Heckmondwike, called "The Lecture."[1] I fancy it had come down from the times of the Nonconformists. A sermon was preached by some stranger at the Lower Chapel on a week-day evening, and the next day two sermons in succession were delivered at the Upper Chapel. Of course the service was a very long one, and as the time was June, and the weather often hot, it used to be regarded by myself and my companions as no pleasurable way of passing the morning. The rest of the day was spent in social enjoyment; great numbers of strangers flocked to

[1] This 'Lecture' is still continued, and is held on the Tuesday and Wednesday after the second Sunday in June. It was started in 1761 by the Rev. James Scott, then Congregational minister at Heckmondwike, who had inaugurated an Academy for the training of ministers, which was the nucleus of the Airedale and the Rotherham Colleges, now the United Independent College, Bradford. Finding himself annoyed by the interruptions caused by the frequent visits of the friends and relatives of the students, he decided to appoint one day in the year, and provided a plain dinner for them; and, in order that they might be profitably entertained, he secured some noted preacher to give a lecture or conduct a service, which institution has continued unto this day. Now there are services at the three large Congregational chapels in the town. On the Tuesday evening two sermons are preached at Westgate (formerly Lower) Chapel; next morning two at the Upper Chapel, and in the evening one at George Street Chapel, the services being attended by ministers and people of all denominations, who come from miles around; and the chapels are packed to their utmost capacity, for the preachers are generally the leading men of the day.

the place; booths were erected for the sale of toys and gingerbread (a sort of "Holy Fair"); and the cottages, having had a little extra paint and whitewashing, assumed quite a holiday look.

'The village of Gomersal' (where Charlotte Brontë's friend 'Mary' lived with her family), 'which was a much prettier place than Heckmondwike, contained a strange-looking cottage, built of rough unhewn stones, many of them projecting considerably, with uncouth heads and grinning faces carved upon them; and upon a stone above the door was cut, in large letters, "SPITE HALL." It was erected by a man in the village, opposite to the house of his enemy, who had just finished for himself a good house, commanding a beautiful view down the valley, which this hideous building quite shut out.'

Fearless—because this people were quite familiar to all of them—amidst such a population, lived and walked the gentle Miss Wooler's eight or nine pupils. She herself was born and bred among this rough, strong, fierce set, and knew the depth of goodness and loyalty that lay beneath their wild manners and insubordinate ways. And the girls talked of the little world around them, as if it were the only world that was; and had their opinions and their parties, and their fierce discussions like their elders—possibly their betters. And among them, beloved and respected by all, laughed at occasionally by a few, but always to her face, lived, for a year and a half, the plain, short-sighted, oddly dressed, studious little girl they called Charlotte Brontë.

CHAPTER VII

Miss Brontë left Roe Head in 1832, having won the affectionate regard both of her teacher and her schoolfellows, and having formed there the two fast friendships which lasted her whole life long; the one with 'Mary,' who has not kept her letters; the other with 'E.,'[1] who has kindly intrusted me with a large portion of Miss Brontë's correspondence with her. This she has been induced to do by her knowledge of the urgent desire on the part of Mr. Brontë that the life of his daughter should be written, and in compliance with a request from her husband that I should be permitted to have the use of these letters, without which such a task could be but very imperfectly executed. In order to shield this friend, however, from any blame or misconstruction, it is only right to state that, before granting me this privilege, she throughout most carefully and completely effaced the names of the persons and places which occurred in them; and also that such information as I have obtained from her bears reference solely to Miss Brontë and her sisters, and not to any other individuals whom I may find it necessary to allude to in connection with them.

In looking over the earlier portion of this correspondence I am struck afresh by the absence of hope, which formed such a strong characteristic in Charlotte. At an age when girls, in general, look forward to an eternal duration of such feelings as they or their friends entertain, and can therefore

[1] 'E.,' as has been said, was Ellen Nussey, whom it will be more convenient henceforth to refer to as 'Ellen.' She received altogether about five hundred letters from Charlotte Brontë and two from Emily. See p. 99.

see no hindrance to the fulfilment of any engagements dependent on the future state of the affections, she is surprised that Ellen keeps her promise to write. In after-life I was painfully impressed with the fact, that Miss Brontë never dared to allow herself to look forward with hope; that she had no confidence in the future; and I thought, when I heard of the sorrowful years she had passed through, that it had been this pressure of grief which had crushed all buoyancy of expectation out of her. But it appears from the letters that it must have been, so to speak, constitutional; or, perhaps, the deep pang of losing her two elder sisters combined with a permanent state of bodily weakness in producing her hopelessness. If her trust in God had been less strong, she would have given way to unbounded anxiety at many a period of her life. As it was, we shall see, she made a great and successful effort to leave 'her times in His hands.'

After her return home she employed herself in teaching her sisters, over whom she had had superior advantages. She writes thus, July 21, 1832, of her course of life at the parsonage:—

'An account of one day is an account of all. In the morning, from nine o'clock till half-past twelve, I instruct my sisters, and draw; then we walk till dinner time. After dinner I sew till tea time, and after tea I either write, read, or do a little fancy work, or draw, as I please. Thus, in one delightful, though somewhat monotonous, course my life is passed. I have been out only twice to tea since I came home. We are expecting company this afternoon, and on Tuesday next we shall have all the female teachers of the Sunday school to tea.' [1]

[1] This letter concludes:—

'I do hope, my dearest Ellen, that you will return to school again for your own sake, though for mine I would rather that you would remain at home, as we shall then have more frequent opportunities of correspondence with each other. Should your friends decide against your returning to school, I know you have too much good sense and right feeling not to

I may here introduce a quotation from a letter which I have received from 'Mary' since the publication of the previous editions of this memoir.

'Soon after leaving school she admitted reading something of Cobbett's. "She did not like him," she said; "but all was fish that came to her net." At this time she wrote to me that reading and drawing were the only amusements she had, and that her supply of books was very small in proportion to her wants. She never spoke of her aunt. When I saw Miss Branwell she was a very precise person, and looked very odd, because her dress, &c., was so utterly out of fashion. She corrected one of us once for using the word "spit" or "spitting." She made a great favourite of Branwell. She made her nieces sew, with purpose or without, and as far as possible discouraged any other culture. She used to keep the girls sewing charity clothing, and maintained to me that it was not for the good of the recipients, but of the sewers. "It was proper for them to do it," she said. Charlotte never was "in wild excitement" that I know of. When in health she used to talk better, and indeed when in low spirits never spoke at all. She needed her best spirits to say what was in her heart, for at other times she had not courage. She never gave decided opinions at such times. . . .

strive earnestly for your own improvement. Your natural abilities are excellent, and under the direction of a judicious and able friend (and I know you have many such) you might acquire a decided taste for elegant literature, and even poetry, which, indeed, is included under that general term. I was very much disappointed by your not sending the hair; you may be sure, my dearest Ellen, that I would not grudge double postage to obtain it, but I must offer the same excuse for not sending you any. My aunt and sisters desire their love to you. Remember me kindly to your mother and sisters, and accept all the fondest expressions of genuine attachment from your real friend,

'Charlotte Brontë.

'P.S.—Remember the mutual promise we made of a regular correspondence with each other. Excuse all faults in this wretched scrawl. Give my love to the Miss Taylors when you see them. Farewell, my *dear, dear, dear* Ellen.'

'Charlotte said she could get on with any one who had a bump at the top of their heads (meaning conscientiousness). I found that I seldom differed from her, except that she was far too tolerant of stupid people, if they had a grain of kindness in them.'

It was about this time that Mr. Brontë provided his children with a teacher in drawing, who turned out to be a man of considerable talent, but very little principle.[1] Although they never attained to anything like proficiency, they took great interest in acquiring this art; evidently, from an instinctive desire to express powerful imaginations in visible forms.[2] Charlotte told me that, at this period of her life, drawing, and walking out with her sisters, formed the two great pleasures and relaxations of her day.

The three girls used to walk upwards toward the 'purple-black' moors, the sweeping surface of which was broken by here and there a stone quarry; and if they had strength and time to go far enough they reached a waterfall, where the beck fell over some rocks into the 'bottom.' They seldom went downwards through the village. They were shy of meeting even familiar faces, and were scrupulous about entering the house of the very poorest uninvited. They were steady teachers at the Sunday school, a habit which Charlotte kept up very faithfully, even after she was left alone; but they never faced their kind voluntarily, and always preferred the solitude and freedom of the moors.

[1] This was William Robinson, a native of Leeds, who had attained to some success as a portrait painter. According to Leyland (*The Brontë Family*) Robinson painted four portraits for the United Service Club. He was for a short time a pupil of Sir Thomas Lawrence, and afterwards of Fuseli. He died in Leeds in 1839. His friends resented the statement in the text as to his lack of principle.

[2] Charlotte Brontë materially injured her eyesight, necessitating the wearing of spectacles, by her laborious efforts at copying old line engravings. Many of these minute copies are still extant. Branwell told George Searle Phillips (the *Mirror*, 1872) that his sister had spent six months over one of these copies.

HAWORTH MOOR—THE BRONTË BRIDGE

In the September of this year Charlotte went to pay her first visit to her friend Ellen. It took her into the neighbourhood of Roe Head, and brought her into pleasant contact with many of her old schoolfellows.[1] After this visit she and her friend seem to have agreed to correspond in French, for the sake of improvement in the language. But this improvement could not be great, when it could only amount to a greater familiarity with dictionary words, and when there was no one to explain to them that a verbal translation of English idioms hardly constituted French composition; but the effort was laudable, and of itself shows how willing they both were to carry on the education which they had begun under Miss Wooler. I will give an extract which, whatever may be thought of the language, is graphic enough, and presents us with a happy little family picture; the eldest sister returning home to the two younger, after a fortnight's absence.

'J'arrivait à Haworth en parfaite sauveté sans le moindre accident ou malheur. Mes petites sœurs couraient hors de la maison pour me rencontrer aussitôt que la voiture se fit voir, et elles m'embrassaient avec autant d'empressement et de plaisir comme si j'avais été absente pour plus d'an. Mon Papa, ma Tante, et le monsieur dont mon frère avoit parlé, furent tous assemblés dans le Salon, et en peu de temps je m'y rendis aussi. C'est souvent l'ordre du Ciel que quand on a perdu un plaisir il y en a un autre prêt à prendre sa place. Ainsi je venois de partir de très chers amis, mais tout à l'heure je revins à des parens aussi chers et bon dans le moment. Même que vous me perdiez (ose-je croire que mon départ vous était un chagrin?) vous attendîtes l'arrivée de votre frère, et de votre sœur. J'ai donné à mes sœurs les pommes que vous leur envoyiez avec tant de bonté; elles disent qu'elles sont sûr que Mademoiselle E. est très aimable et bonne; l'une et l'autre sont extrêmement impatientes de vous voir; j'espère qu'en peu de mois elles auront ce plaisir.'

[1] This was at The Rydings, where Ellen Nussey was staying with an elder brother.

But it was some time yet before the friends could meet, and meanwhile they agreed to correspond once a month. There were no events to chronicle in the Haworth letters. Quiet days, occupied in teaching, and feminine occupations in the house, did not present much to write about; and Charlotte was naturally driven to criticise books.

Of thes there were many in different plights, and, according to their plight, kept in different places. The well-bound were ranged in the sanctuary of Mr. Brontë's study; but the purchase of books was a necessary luxury to him, but as it was often a choice between binding an old one and buying a new one, the familiar volume, which had been hungrily read by all the members of the family, was sometimes in such a condition that the bedroom shelf was considered its fitting place. Up and down the house were to be found many standard works of a solid kind. Sir Walter Scott's writings, Wordsworth's and Southey's poems were among the lighter literature; while, as having a character of their own—earnest, wild, and occasionally fanatical—may be named some of the books which came from the Branwell side of the family—from the Cornish followers of the saintly John Wesley—and which are touched on in the account of the works to which Caroline Helstone had access in 'Shirley:' —'Some venerable Lady's Magazines, that had once performed a voyage with their owner, and undergone a storm' (possibly part of the relics of Mrs. Brontë's possessions, contained in the ship wrecked on the coast of Cornwall), 'and whose pages were stained with salt water; some mad Methodist Magazines full of miracles and apparitions and preternatural warnings, ominous dreams, and frenzied fanaticisms; and the equally mad letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe from the Dead to the Living.'[1]

[1] Four books that are extant belonging to an earlier period than this are—

I. *The Imitation of Christ*, inscribed 'M. Branwell,' to which reference has already been made. See p. 55, note.

Mr. Brontë encouraged a taste for reading in his girls; and though Miss Branwell kept it in due bounds, by the variety of household occupations, in which she expected them not merely to take a part, but to become proficients, thereby occupying regularly a good portion of every day, they were allowed to get books from the circulating library at Keighley; and many a happy walk up those long four miles must they have had, burdened with some new book, into which they peeped as they hurried home. Not that the books were what would generally be called new; in the beginning of 1833 the two friends seem almost simultaneously to have fallen upon 'Kenilworth,' and Charlotte writes as follows about it:—

'I am glad you like "Kenilworth;" it is certainly more resembling a romance than a novel: in my opinion, one of the most interesting works that ever emanated from the great Sir Walter's pen. Varney is certainly the personification of consummate villany; and in the delineation of his dark and profoundly artful mind Scott exhibits a wonderful knowledge of human nature, as well as a surprising skill in embodying his perceptions, so as to enable others to become participators in that knowledge.'

Commonplace as this extract may seem, it is noteworthy on two or three accounts: in the first place, instead of discussing the plot or story, she analyses the character of Varney; and next, she, knowing nothing of the world, both from her youth and her isolated position, has yet been so

II. *Scott's Tales of a Grandfather*, 1828, 3 vols., and inscribed in Miss Branwell's handwriting—

'*These volumes were written by Sir Walter Scott, and the Hugh Little John mentioned in them is Master Lockhart, grandson to Sir Walter.*

'*A New Year's Gift by Miss E. B. to her dear little nephew and nieces Patrick, Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë*, 1828.'

III. *Goldsmith's Essays and Poems*, 1824, 1 vol., inscribed—

'*French Prize, adjudged to Miss Brontë, and presented with the Miss Wooler's kind love.*'

IV. *The Book of Common Prayer*, 1823, inscribed—

'*Miss Outhwaite to her goddaughter Anne Brontë*, Feb. 13, 1827.'

accustomed to hear 'human nature' distrusted as to receive the notion of intense and artful villainy without surprise.

What was formal and set in her way of writing to 'Ellen' diminished as their personal acquaintance increased, and as each came to know the home of the other; so that small details concerning people and places had their interest and their significance. In the summer of 1833 she wrote to invite her friend to come and pay her a visit. 'Aunt thought it would be better,' she says, 'to defer it until about the middle of summer, as the winter, and even the spring seasons, are remarkably cold and bleak among our mountains.'

The first impression made on the visitor by the sisters of her school friend was, that Emily was a tall, long-armed girl, more fully grown than her elder sister; extremely reserved in manner. I distinguish reserve from shyness, because I imagine shyness would please, if it knew how; whereas reserve is indifferent whether it pleases or not. Anne, like her eldest sister, was shy; Emily was reserved.

Branwell was rather a handsome boy, with 'tawny' hair, to use Miss Brontë's phrase for a more obnoxious colour. All were very clever, original, and utterly different from any people or family 'Ellen' had ever seen before. But, on the whole, it was a happy visit to all parties. Charlotte says, in writing to 'Ellen' just after her return home, 'Were I to tell you of the impression you have made on every one here, you would accuse me of flattery. Papa and aunt are continually adducing you as an example for me to shape my actions and behaviour by. Emily and Anne say "they never saw any one they liked so well as you." And Tabby, whom you have absolutely fascinated, talks a great deal more nonsense about your ladyship than I care to repeat. It is now so dark that, notwithstanding the singular property of seeing in the night-time, which the young ladies at Roe Head used to attribute to me, I can scribble no longer.'

To a visitor at the parsonage it was a great thing to have Tabby's good word. She had a Yorkshire keenness of

perception into character, and it was not everybody she liked.

Haworth is built with an utter disregard of all sanitary conditions: the great old churchyard lies above all the houses, and it is terrible to think how the very water-springs of the pumps below must be poisoned. But this winter of 1833–4 was particularly wet and rainy, and there were an unusual number of deaths in the village. A dreary season it was to the family in the parsonage: their usual walks obstructed by the spongy state of the moors—the passing and funeral bells so frequently tolling, and filling the heavy air with their mournful sound—and, when they were still, the 'chip, chip' of the mason, as he cut the grave-stones in a shed close by. In many, living, as it were, in a churchyard, and with all the sights and sounds connected with the last offices to the dead things of everyday occurrence, the very familiarity would have bred indifference. But it was otherwise with Charlotte Brontë. One of her friends says, 'I have seen her turn pale and feel faint when, in Hartshead church, some one accidentally remarked that we were walking over graves. Charlotte was certainly afraid of death. Not only of dead bodies, or dying people. She dreaded it as something horrible. She thought we did not know how long the 'moment of dissolution' might really be, or how terrible. This was just such a terror as only hypochondriacs can provide for themselves. She told me long ago that a misfortune was often preceded by the dream frequently repeated which she gives to 'Jane Eyre,' of carrying a little wailing child, and being unable to still it. She described herself as having the most painful sense of pity for the little thing, lying *inert*, as sick children do, while she walked about in some gloomy place with it, such as the aisle of Haworth church. The misfortunes she mentioned were not always to herself. She thought such sensitiveness to omens was like the cholera, present to susceptible people —some feeling more, some less.'

About the beginning of 1834 'Ellen' went to London for

the first time. The idea of her friend's visit seems to have stirred Charlotte strangely. She appears to have formed her notions of its probable consequences from some of the papers in the 'British Essayists,' the 'Rambler,' the 'Mirror,' or the 'Lounger,' which may have been among the English classics on the parsonage book-shelves; for she evidently imagines that an entire change of character for the worse is the usual effect of a visit to 'the great metropolis,' and is delighted to find that 'Ellen' is 'Ellen' still. And, as her faith in her friend's stability is restored, her own imagination is deeply moved by the idea of what great wonders are to be seen in that vast and famous city.

'Haworth: February 20, 1834.

'Your letter gave me real and heartfelt pleasure, mingled with no small share of astonishment. Mary had previously informed me of your departure for London, and I had not ventured to calculate on any communication from you while surrounded by the splendours and novelties of that great city, which has been called the mercantile metropolis of Europe. Judging from human nature, I thought that a little country girl, for the first time in a situation so well calculated to excite curiosity and to distract attention, would lose all remembrance, for a time at least, of distant and familiar objects, and give herself up entirely to the fascination of those scenes which were then presented to her view. Your kind, interesting, and most welcome epistle showed me, however, that I had been both mistaken and uncharitable in these suppositions. I was greatly amused at the tone of nonchalance which you assumed while treating of London and its wonders. Did you not feel awed while gazing at St. Paul's and Westminster Abbey? Had you no feeling of intense and ardent interest when in St. James's you saw the palace where so many of England's kings have held their courts, and beheld the representations of their persons on the walls? You should not be too much afraid of appearing *country-bred*; the magnificence of London has drawn ex-

clamations of astonishment from travelled men, experienced in the world, its wonders and beauties. Have you yet seen anything of the great personages whom the sitting of Parliament now detains in London—the Duke of Wellington, Sir Robert Peel, Earl Grey, Mr. Stanley, Mr. O'Connell? If I were you, I would not be too anxious to spend my time in reading whilst in town. Make use of your own eyes for the purposes of observation now, and, for a time at least, lay aside the spectacles with which authors would furnish us.'

In a postscript she adds—

'Will you be kind enough to inform me of the number of performers in the King's military band?'

And in something of the same strain she writes on

'June 19.

'My *own* dear Ellen,—I may rightfully and truly call you so now. Your *have* returned or *are* returning from London—from the great city which is to me as apocryphal as Babylon, or Nineveh, or ancient Rome. You are withdrawing from the world (as it is called), and bringing with you—if your letters enable me to form a correct judgment—a heart as unsophisticated, as natural, as true, as that you carried there. I am slow, *very* slow, to believe the protestations of another; I know my own sentiments, I can read my own mind, but the minds of the rest of man and woman kind are to me sealed volumes, hieroglyphical scrolls, which I cannot easily either unseal or decipher. Yet time, careful study, long acquaintance, overcome most difficulties; and, in your case, I think they have succeeded well in bringing to light and construing that hidden language, whose turnings, windings, inconsistencies, and obscurities so frequently baffle the researches of the honest observer of human nature. . . . I am truly grateful for your mindfulness of so obscure a person as myself, and I hope the pleasure is not altogether selfish; I trust it is partly derived from the consciousness that my friend's character is of a higher, a more steadfast order than I was once perfectly aware of. Few

girls would have done as you have done—would have beheld the glare, and glitter, and dazzling display of London with dispositions so unchanged, hearts so uncontaminated. I see no affectation in your letters, no trifling, no frivolous contempt of plain and weak admiration of showy persons and things.'

In these days of cheap railway trips, we may smile at the idea of a short visit to London having any great effect upon the character, whatever it may have upon the intellect. But her London—her great apocryphal city—was the 'town' of a century before, to which giddy daughters dragged unwilling papas, or went with injudicious friends, to the detriment of all their better qualities, and sometimes to the ruin of their fortunes; it was the Vanity Fair of the 'Pilgrim's Progress' to her.

But see the just and admirable sense with which she can treat a subject of which she is able to overlook all the bearings.

'Haworth: July 4, 1834.

'In your last you request me to tell you of your faults. Now, really, how can you be so foolish? I *won't* tell you of your faults, because I don't know them. What a creature would that be who, after receiving an affectionate and kind letter from a beloved friend, should sit down and write a catalogue of defects by way of answer! Imagine me doing so, and then consider what epithets you would bestow on me. Conceited, dogmatical, hypocritical little humbug, I should think, would be the mildest. Why, child! I've neither time nor inclination to reflect on your *faults* when you are so far from me, and when, besides, kind letters and presents, and so forth, are continually bringing forth your goodness in the most prominent light. Then, too, there are judicious relations always round you, who can much better discharge that unpleasant office. I have no doubt their advice is completely at your service; why then should I intrude mine? If you will not hear *them*, it will be vain though one should rise from the dead to instruct you. Let us have

no more nonsense, if you love me. Mr. —— is going to be married, is he? Well, his wife elect appeared to me to be a clever and amiable lady, as far as I could judge from the little I saw of her, and from your account. Now to that flattering sentence must I tack on a list of her faults? You say it is in contemplation for you to leave Rydings. I am sorry for it. Rydings is a pleasant spot, one of the old family halls of England, surrounded by lawn and woodland, speaking of past times, and suggesting (to me at least) happy feelings. Mary thought you grown less, did she? I am not grown a bit, but as short and dumpy as ever. You ask me to recommend you some books for your perusal. I will do so in as few words as I can. If you like poetry, let it be first-rate; Milton, Shakespeare, Thomson, Goldsmith, Pope (if you will, though I don't admire him), Scott, Byron, Campbell, Wordsworth, and Southey. Now don't be startled at the names of Shakespeare and Byron. Both these were great men, and their works are like themselves. You will know how to choose the good, and to avoid the evil; the finest passages are always the purest, the bad are invariably revolting; you will never wish to read them over twice. Omit the comedies of Shakespeare, and the "Don Juan," perhaps the "Cain," of Byron, though the latter is a magnificent poem, and read the rest fearlessly; that must indeed be a depraved mind which can gather evil from "Henry VIII.," from "Richard III.," from "Macbeth," and "Hamlet," and "Julius Cæsar." Scott's sweet, wild, romantic poetry can do you no harm. Nor can Wordsworth's, nor Campbell's, nor Southey's —the greatest part at least of his; some is certainly objectionable. For history, read Hume, Rollin, and the "Universal History," if you *can*; I never did. For fiction, read Scott alone; all novels after his are worthless. For biography, read Johnson's "Lives of the Poets," Boswell's "Life of Johnson," Southey's "Life of Nelson," Lockhart's "Life of Burns," Moore's "Life of Sheridan," Moore's "Life of Byron," Wolfe's "Remains." For natural history, read Bewick and Audubon, and Goldsmith, and "White's History of Selborne."

For divinity, your brother[1] will advise you there. I can only say, adhere to standard authors, and avoid novelty.'

From this list, we see that she must have had a good range of books from which to choose her own reading. It is evident that the womanly consciences of these two correspondents were anxiously alive to many questions discussed among the stricter religionists. The morality of Shakespeare needed the confirmation of Charlotte's opinion to the sensitive 'Ellen;' and, a little later, she inquired whether dancing was objectionable when indulged in for an hour or two in parties of boys and girls. Charlotte replies, 'I should hesitate to express a difference of opinion from Mr. Atkinson, or from your excellent sister, but really the matter seems to me to stand thus: It is allowed on all hands that the sin of dancing consists not in the mere action of shaking the shanks' (as the Scotch say), but in the consequences that usually attend it; namely, frivolity and waste of time; when it is used only, as in the case you state, for the exercise and amusement of an hour among young people (who surely may without any breach of God's commandments be allowed a little light-heartedness), these consequences cannot follow. Ergo (according to my manner of arguing), the amusement is at such times perfectly innocent.'

Although the distance between Haworth and Birstall was but seventeen miles, it was difficult to go straight from the one to the other without hiring a gig or vehicle of some kind for the journey. Hence a visit from Charlotte required a good deal of prearrangement. *The* Haworth gig was not always to be had; and Mr. Brontë was often unwilling to fall into any arrangement for meeting at Bradford or other places which would occasion trouble to others. The whole family had an ample share of that sensitive pride which led them to dread incurring obligations, and to fear 'outstaying their welcome' when on any visit. I am not sure whether Mr. Brontë did not consider distrust of others as a part of that knowledge of human nature on which he piqued himself.

[1] Henry Nussey, then in training for the Church.

His precepts to this effect, combined with Charlotte's lack of hope, made her always fearful of loving too much ; of wearying the objects of her affection ; and thus she was often trying to restrain her warm feelings, and was ever chary of that presence so invariably welcome to her true friends. According to this mode of acting, when she was invited for a month she stayed but a fortnight amidst 'Ellen's' family, to whom every visit only endeared her the more, and by whom she was received with a kind of quiet gladness with which they would have greeted a sister.

She still kept up her childish interest in politics. In March 1835 she writes, 'What do you think of the course politics are taking? I make this inquiry because I now think you take a wholesome interest in the matter; formerly you did not care greatly about it. B.,[1] you see, is triumphant. Wretch! I am a hearty hater, and if there is any one I thoroughly abhor, it is that man. But the Opposition is divided, Red-hots and Luke-warms; and the Duke (par excellence *the* Duke) and Sir Robert Peel show no signs of insecurity, though they have been twice beat; so "courage, mon amie," as the old chevaliers used to say before they joined battle.'

In the middle of the summer of 1835 a great family plan was mooted at the parsonage. The question was, to what trade or profession should Branwell be brought up? He was now nearly eighteen ; it was time to decide. He was very clever, no doubt ; perhaps, to begin with, the greatest genius in this rare family. The sisters hardly recognised their own or each other's powers, but they knew *his*. The father, ignorant of many failings in moral conduct, did proud homage to the great gifts of his son ; for Branwell's talents were readily and willingly brought out for the entertainment of others. Popular admiration was sweet to him. And this

[1] Henry, Lord Brougham (1778–1868). He was Lord Chancellor in Earl Grey's Ministry of 1830. He was not, however, contrary to expectation, offered the seals in Lord Melbourne's Ministry when it took office in 1835.

led to his presence being sought at 'arvills' and all the great village gatherings, for the Yorkshiremen have a keen relish for intellect; and it likewise procured him the undesirable distinction of having his company recommended by the landlord of the 'Black Bull' to any chance traveller who might happen to feel solitary or dull over his liquor. 'Do you want some one to help you with your bottle, sir? If you do I'll send for Patrick' (so the villagers called him till the day of his death, though in his own family he was always 'Branwell'). And while the messenger went the landlord entertained his guest with accounts of the wonderful talents of the boy, whose precocious cleverness, and great conversational powers, were the pride of the village. The attacks of ill health to which Mr. Brontë had been subject of late years rendered it not only necessary that he should take his dinner alone (for the sake of avoiding temptations to unwholesome diet), but made it also desirable that he should pass the time directly succeeding his meals in perfect quiet. And this necessity, combined with due attention to his parochial duties, made him partially ignorant how his son employed himself out of lesson time. His own youth had been spent among people of the same conventional rank as those into whose companionship Branwell was now thrown; but he had had a strong will, and an earnest and persevering ambition, and a resoluteness of purpose which his weaker son wanted.

It is singular how strong a yearning the whole family had towards the art of drawing. Mr. Brontë had been very solicitous to get them good instruction; the girls themselves loved everything connected with it—all descriptions or engravings of great pictures; and, in default of good ones, they would take and analyse any print or drawing which came in their way, and find out how much thought had gone to its composition, what ideas it was intended to suggest, and what it *did* suggest. In the same spirit they laboured to design imaginations of their own; they lacked the power of execution, not of conception. At one time

Charlotte had the notion of making her living as an artist, and wearied her eyes in drawing with pre-Raphaelite minuteness, but not with pre-Raphaelite accuracy, for she drew from fancy rather than from nature.

But they all thought there could be no doubt about Branwell's talent for drawing. I have seen an oil painting of his, done I know not when, but probably about this time. It was a group of his sisters, life size, three-quarters length; not much better than sign-painting, as to manipulation; but the likenesses were, I should think, admirable. I could only judge of the fidelity with which the other two were depicted from the striking resemblance which Charlotte, upholding the great frame of canvas, and consequently standing right behind it, bore to her own representation, though it must have been ten years and more since the portraits were taken. The picture was divided, almost in the middle, by a great pillar. On the side of the column which was lighted by the sun stood Charlotte in the womanly dress of that day of gigot sleeves and large collars. On the deeply shadowed side was Emily, with Anne's gentle face resting on her shoulder. Emily's countenance struck me as full of power; Charlotte's of solicitude; Anne's of tenderness. The two younger seemed hardly to have attained their full growth, though Emily was taller than Charlotte; they had cropped hair, and a more girlish dress. I remember looking on those two sad, earnest, shadowed faces, and wondering whether I could trace the mysterious expression which is said to foretell an early death. I had some fond, superstitious hope that the column divided their fates from hers, who stood apart in the canvas, as in life she survived. I liked to see that the bright side of the pillar was towards *her*—that the light in the picture fell on *her*: I might more truly have sought in her presentment—nay, in her living face—for the sign of death in her prime. They were good likenesses, however badly executed.[1] From thence I should guess his

[1] This portrait group, which for some years stood at the top of the staircase at the Haworth parsonage, exactly facing the door of the little

family argued truly that, if Branwell had but the opportunity, and, alas! had but the moral qualities, he might turn out a great painter.

The best way of preparing him to become so appeared to be to send him as a pupil to the Royal Academy.[1] I dare say he longed and yearned to follow this path, principally because it would lead him to that mysterious London—that Babylon the great—which seems to have filled the imaginations and haunted the minds of all the younger members of this recluse family. To Branwell it was more than a vivid imagination, it was an impressed reality. By dint of studying maps he was as well acquainted with it, even down to its byways, as if he had lived there. Poor misguided fellow! this craving to see and know London, and that stronger craving after fame, were never to be satisfied. He was to die at the end of a short and blighted life. But in this year of 1835 all his home kindred were thinking how

room that had been the children's nursery, was removed by Mr. A. B. Nicholls to his home in Ireland when he left Haworth. He thought so poorly of the portraits of his wife and of Anne Brontë that he cut them out of the canvas and destroyed them. He retained, however, the portrait of Emily, and this he gave to Martha Brown, the Brontës' servant, on one of her several visits to him in Ireland. Martha Brown took it back with her to Haworth, but it has long since disappeared. Fortunately, however, a photograph of the family group was made from another picture by Branwell at Haworth, and this photograph has been identified by Mr. A. B. Nicholls as containing a good portrait of Emily. The volume of *Wuthering Heights* in this series of the Brontë novels contains a beautiful reproduction of this portrait—the only attempt at a presentation of Emily Brontë's appearance that we shall ever know.

[1] Branwell wrote as follows to the Secretary of the Royal Academy (only this fragment of his letter remains):—

'Sir,—Having an earnest desire to enter as probationary student in the Royal Academy, but not being possessed of information as to the means of obtaining my desire, I presume to request from you, as Secretary to the Institution, an answer to the questions—

'Where am I to present my drawings?

'At what time?

and especially,

'Can I do it in August or September?'

they could best forward his views, and how help him up to the pinnacle where he desired to be. What their plans were let Charlotte explain. These are not the first sisters who have laid their lives as a sacrifice before their brother's idolised wish. Would to God they might be the last who met with such a miserable return!

'Haworth: July 6, 1835.

'I had hoped to have had the extreme pleasure of seeing you at Haworth this summer, but human affairs are mutable, and human resolutions must bend to the course of events. We are all about to divide, break up, separate. Emily is going to school, Branwell is going to London, and I am going to be a governess. This last determination I formed myself, knowing that I should have to take the step some time, "and better sune as syne," to use the Scotch proverb; and knowing well that papa would have enough to do with his limited income, should Branwell be placed at the Royal Academy, and Emily at Roe Head. Where am I going to reside? you will ask. Within four miles of you, at a place neither of us is unacquainted with, being no other than the identical Roe Head mentioned above. Yes! I am going to teach in the very school where I was myself taught. Miss Wooler made me the offer, and I preferred it to one or two proposals of private governess-ship, which I had before received. I am sad—very sad—at the thoughts of leaving home; but duty—necessity—these are stern mistresses, who will not be disobeyed. Did I not once say you ought to be thankful for your independence? I felt what I said at the time, and I repeat it now with double earnestness; if anything would cheer me, it is the idea of being so near you. Surely you and Polly[1] will come and see me; it would be wrong in me to doubt it; you were never unkind yet. Emily and I leave home on the 27th of this month; the idea of being together consoles us both somewhat, and, truth, since I must enter a situation, "my lines have fallen in pleasant places." I both love and respect Miss Wooler.'

[1] Mary Taylor.

CHAPTER VIII

On July 29, 1835, Charlotte, now a little more than nineteen years old, went as teacher to Miss Wooler's. Emily accompanied her as a pupil; but she became literally ill from home-sickness, and could not settle to anything, and after passing only three months at Roe Head returned to the parsonage and the beloved moors.

Miss Brontë gives the following reasons as those which prevented Emily's remaining at school, and caused the substitution of her younger sister in her place at Miss Wooler's :—

'My sister Emily loved the moors. Flowers brighter than the rose bloomed in the blackest of the heath for her; out of a sullen hollow in a livid hillside her mind could make an Eden. She found in the bleak solitude many and dear delights; and not the least and best loved was—liberty. Liberty was the breath of Emily's nostrils; without it she perished. The change from her own home to a school, and from her own very noiseless, very secluded, but unrestricted and unartificial mode of life, to one of disciplined routine (though under the kindest auspices) was what she failed in enduring. Her nature proved here too strong for her fortitude. Every morning, when she woke, the vision of home and the moors rushed on her, and darkened and saddened the day that lay before her. Nobody knew what ailed her but me. I knew only too well. In this struggle her health was quickly broken: her white face, attenuated form, and failing strength threatened rapid decline. I felt in my heart she would die if she did not go home, and with this conviction obtained her recall. She had only been three months

at school; and it was some years before the experiment of sending her from home was again ventured on.'

This physical suffering on Emily's part when absent from Haworth, after recurring several times under similar circumstances, became at length so much an acknowledged fact, that whichever was obliged to leave home, the sisters decided that Emily must remain there, where alone she could enjoy anything like good health. She left it twice again in her life; once going as teacher to a school in Halifax for six months, and afterwards accompanying Charlotte to Brussels for ten. When at home she took the principal part of the cooking upon herself, and did all the household ironing; and after Tabby grew old and infirm it was Emily who made all the bread for the family; and any one passing by the kitchen door might have seen her studying German out of an open book, propped up before her, as she kneaded the dough; but no study, however interesting, interfered with the goodness of the bread, which was always light and excellent. Books were, indeed, a very common sight in that kitchen; the girls were taught by their father theoretically, and by their aunt practically, that to take an active part in all household work was, in their position, woman's simple duty; but in their careful employment of time they found many an odd five minutes for reading while watching the cakes, and managed the union of two kinds of employment better than King Alfred.

Charlotte's life at Miss Wooler's was a very happy one, until her health failed. She sincerely loved and respected the former schoolmistress, to whom she was now become both companion and friend. The girls were hardly strangers to her, some of them being younger sisters of those who had been her own playmates. Though the duties of the day might be tedious and monotonous, there were always two or three happy hours to look forward to in the evening, when she and Miss Wooler sat together—sometimes late into the night—and had quiet, pleasant conversations, or pauses of silence as agreeable, because each felt that as soon as a

thought or remark occurred which they wished to express there was an intelligent companion ready to sympathise, and yet they were not compelled to 'make talk.'

Miss Wooler was always anxious to afford Miss Brontë every opportunity of recreation in her power; but the difficulty often was to persuade her to avail herself of the invitations which came, urging her to spend Saturday and Sunday with 'Ellen' and 'Mary' in their respective homes, that lay within the distance of a walk. She was too apt to consider that allowing herself a holiday was a dereliction of duty, and to refuse herself the necessary change, from something of an over-ascetic spirit, betokening a loss of healthy balance in either body or mind. Indeed, it is clear that such was the case, from a passage, referring to this time, in the letter of 'Mary' from which I have before given extracts.

'Three years after' (the period when they were at school together) 'I heard that she had gone as teacher to Miss Wooler's. I went to see her, and asked how she could give so much for so little money, when she could live without it. She owned that, after clothing herself and Anne, there was nothing left, though she had hoped to be able to save something. She confessed it was not brilliant, but what could she do? I had nothing to answer. She seemed to have no interest or pleasure beyond the feeling of duty, and, when she could get the opportunity, used to sit alone, and "make out." She told me afterwards that one evening she had sat in the dressing-room until it was quite dark, and then observing it all at once had taken sudden fright.' No doubt she remembered this well when she described a similar terror getting hold upon Jane Eyre. She says in the story, 'I sat looking at the white bed and overshadowed walls—occasionally turning a fascinated eye towards the gleaming mirror—I began to recall what I had heard of dead men troubled in their graves. . . . I endeavoured to be firm; shaking my hair from my eyes, I lifted my head and tried to look boldly through the dark room; at this moment, a ray

from the moon penetrated some aperture in the blind. No! moonlight was still, and this stirred . . . prepared as my mind was for horror, shaken as my nerves were by agitation, I thought the swift-darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another world. My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears which I deemed the rustling of wings; something seemed near me.'[1]

'From that time,' Mary adds, 'her imaginations became gloomy or frightful; she could not help it, nor help thinking. She could not forget the gloom, could not sleep at night, nor attend in the day.

'She told me that one night, sitting alone, about this time, she heard a voice repeat these lines:

> 'Come, thou high and holy feeling,
> Shine o'er mountain, flit o'er wave,
> Gleam like light o'er dome and shieling.

There were eight or ten more lines which I forget. She insisted that she had not made them, that she had heard a voice repeat them. It is possible that she had read them, and unconsciously recalled them. They are not in the volume of poems which the sisters published. She repeated a verse of Isaiah, which she said had inspired them, and which I have forgotten. Whether the lines were recollected or invented, the tale proves such habits of sedentary, monotonous solitude of thought as would have shaken a feebler mind.'

Of course the state of health thus described came on gradually, and is not to be taken as a picture of her condition in 1836. Yet even then there is a despondency in some of her expressions, that too sadly reminds one of some of Cowper's letters. And it is remarkable how deeply his poems impressed her. His words, his verses, came more frequently to her memory, I imagine, than those of any other poet.

'Mary' says, 'Cowper's poem, "The Castaway," was known to them all, and they all at times appreciated, or

[1] *Jane Eyre.*

almost appropriated it. Charlotte told me once that Branwell had done so; and though his depression was the result of his faults, it was in no other respect different from hers. Both were not mental but physical illnesses. She was well aware of this, and would ask how that mended matters, as the feeling was there all the same, and was not removed by knowing the cause. She had a larger religious toleration than a person would have who had never questioned, and the manner of recommending religion was always that of offering comfort, not fiercely enforcing a duty. One time I mentioned that some one had asked me what religion I was of (with the view of getting me for a partisan), and that I had said that that was between God and me. Emily (who was lying on the hearth-rug) exclaimed, "That's right." This was all I ever heard Emily say on religious subjects. Charlotte was free from religious depression when in tolerable health; when that failed her depression returned. You have probably seen such instances. They don't get over their difficulties; they forget them, when their stomach (or whatever organ it is that inflicts such misery on sedentary people) will let them. I have heard her condemn Socinianism, Calvinism, and many other "isms" inconsistent with Church of Englandism. I used to wonder at her acquaintance with such subjects.'

'May 10, 1836.

'I was struck with the note you sent me with the umbrella; it showed a degree of interest in my concerns which I have no right to expect from any earthly creature. I won't play the hypocrite; I won't answer your kind, gentle, friendly questions in the way you wish me to. Don't deceive yourself by imagining I have a bit of real goodness about me. My darling, if I were like you, I should have my face Zionward, though prejudice and error might occasionally fling a mist over the glorious vision before me —but *I am not like you.* If you knew my thoughts, the dreams that absorb me, and the fiery imagination that at

times eats me up, and makes me feel society, as it is, wretchedly insipid, you would pity and I dare say despise me. But I know the treasures of the *Bible*; I love and adore them. I can *see* the Well of Life in all its clearness and brightness; but when I stoop down to drink of the pure waters they fly from my lips as if I were Tantalus.

'You are far too kind and frequent in your invitations. You puzzle me. I hardly know how to refuse, and it is still more embarrassing to accept. At any rate I cannot come this week, for we are in the very thickest *mêlée* of the Repetitions. I was hearing the terrible fifth section when your note arrived. But Miss Wooler says I must go to Mary next Friday, as she promised for me on Whit Sunday; and on Sunday morning I will join you at church, if it be convenient, and stay till Monday. There's a free and easy proposal! Miss Wooler has driven me to it. She says her character is implicated.'

Good, kind Miss Wooler! however monotonous and trying were the duties Charlotte had to perform under her roof, there was always a genial and thoughtful friend watching over her, and urging her to partake of any little piece of innocent recreation that might come in her way. And in those midsummer holidays of 1836 her friend 'Ellen' came to stay with her at Haworth, so there was one happy time secured.

Here follows a series of letters, not dated, but belonging to the latter portion of this year; and again we think of the gentle and melancholy Cowper.

'My *dear dear* Ellen,—I am at this moment trembling all over with excitement, after reading your note; it is what I never received before—it is the unrestrained pouring out of a warm, gentle, generous heart. . . . I thank you with energy for this kindness. I will no longer shrink from answering your questions. I *do* wish to be better than I am. I pray fervently sometimes to be made so. I have stings of

conscience, visitings of remorse, glimpses of holy, of inexpressible things, which formerly I used to be a stranger to; it may all die away, and I may be in utter midnight, but I implore a merciful Redeemer that, if this be the dawn of the gospel, it may still brighten to perfect day. Do not mistake me—do not think I am good; I only wish to be so. I only hate my former flippancy and forwardness. Oh! I am no better than ever I was. I am in that state of horrid, gloomy uncertainty that, at this moment, I would submit to be old, grey-haired, to have passed all my youthful days of enjoyment, and to be settling on the verge of the grave, if I could only thereby ensure the prospect of reconciliation to God, and redemption through His Son's merits. I never was exactly careless of these matters, but I have always taken a clouded and repulsive view of them; and now, if possible, the clouds are gathering darker, and a more oppressive despondency weighs on my spirits. You have cheered me, my darling; for one moment, for an atom of time, I thought I might call you my own sister in the spirit; but the excitement is past, and I am now as wretched and hopeless as ever. This very night I will pray as you wish me. May the Almighty hear me compassionately! and I humbly hope He will, for you will strengthen my polluted petitions with your own pure requests. All is bustle and confusion round me, the ladies pressing with their sums and their lessons. . . . If you love me, *do, do, do* come on Friday: I shall watch and wait for you, and if you disappoint me I shall weep. I wish you could know the thrill of delight which I experienced when, as I stood at the dining-room window, I saw ——,[1] as he whirled past, toss your little packet over the wall.'

Huddersfield market day was still the great period for events at Roe Head. Then girls, running round the corner of the house and peeping between tree stems, and up a shadowy lane, could catch a glimpse of a father or brother

[1] 'your brother George.'

driving to market in his gig; might, perhaps, exchange a wave of the hand; or see, as Charlotte Brontë did from the window, a white packet tossed over the wall by some swift, strong motion of an arm, the rest of the traveller's body unseen.

'Weary with a day's hard work . . . I am sitting down to write a few lines to my dear Ellen. Excuse me if I say nothing but nonsense, for my mind is exhausted and dispirited. It is a stormy evening, and the wind is uttering a continual moaning sound, that makes me feel very melancholy. At such times—in such moods as these—it is my nature to seek repose in some calm, tranquil idea, and I have now summoned up your image to give me rest. There you sit, upright and still in your black dress, and white scarf, and pale, marble-like face—just like reality. I wish you would speak to me. If we should be separated—if it should be our lot to live at a great distance, and never to see each other again—in old age, how I should conjure up the memory of my youthful days, and what a melancholy pleasure I should feel in dwelling on the recollection of my early friend! . . . I have some qualities that make me very miserable, some feelings that you can have no participation in—that few, very few people in the world can at all understand. I don't pride myself on these peculiarities. I strive to conceal and suppress them as much as I can; but they burst out sometimes, and then those who see the explosion depise me, and I hate myself for days afterwards. . . . I have just received your epistle and what accompanied it. I can't tell what should induce you and your sisters to waste your kindness on such a one as me. I'm obliged to them, and I hope you'll tell them so. I'm obliged to you also, more for your note than for your present. The first gave me pleasure, the last something like pain.'

The nervous disturbance, which is stated to have troubled her while she was at Miss Wooler's, seems to have begun to distress her about this time; at least, she herself speaks

of her irritable condition, which was certainly only a temporary ailment.

'You have been very kind to me of late, and have spared me all those little sallies of ridicule which, owing to my miserable and wretched touchiness of character, used formerly to make me wince, as if I had been touched with a hot iron; things that nobody else cares for enter into my mind and rankle there like venom. I know these feelings are absurd, and therefore I try to hide them, but they only sting the deeper for concealment.'

Compare this state of mind with the gentle resignation with which she had submitted to be put aside as useless, or told of her ugliness by her schoolfellows, only three years before.

'My life since I saw you has passed as monotonously and unbroken as ever; nothing but teach, teach, teach, from morning till night. The greatest variety I ever have is afforded by a letter from you, or by meeting with a pleasant new book. The "Life of Oberlin,"[1] and Legh Richmond's "Domestic Portraiture,"[2] are the last of this description. The latter work strongly attracted and strangely fascinated my attention. Beg, borrow, or steal it without delay; and read the "Memoir of Wilberforce"—that short record of a brief, uneventful life; I shall never forget it; it is beautiful, not on account of the language in which it is written, not on account of the incidents it details, but because of the simple narrative it gives of a young talented, sincere Christian.'

About this time Miss Wooler removed her school from

[1] The *Life of Oberlin* was entitled *Brief Memorials of Oberlin*. Sims was the name of the author, and it was published in 1830. Johann Friedrich Oberlin, an Alsatian pastor, was a pioneer of education. He was born at Strasburg in 1740, and died in 1826.

[2] Legh Richmond (1772–1827) was one of the most popular authors of his day. His *Dairyman's Daughter* is still read. *Domestic Portraiture* was published in 1833.

the fine, open, breezy situation of Roe Head to Dewsbury Moor, only two or three miles distant.[1] Her new residence was on a lower site, and the air was less exhilarating to one bred in the wild hill village of Haworth. Emily had gone as teacher to a school at Halifax, where there were nearly forty pupils.

'I have had one letter from her since her departure,' writes Charlotte on October 2, 1836: 'it gives an appalling account of her duties; hard labour from six in the morning to eleven at night, with only one half-hour of exercise between. This is slavery. I fear she can never stand it.'[2]

When the sisters met at home in the Christmas holidays they talked over their lives, and the prospect which they afforded of employment and remuneration. They felt that it was a duty to relieve their father of the burden of their

[1] It must have been after the holidays of Christmas 1836 that the removal to Dewsbury took place, as there is a memento of that date in the form of a copy of *Watts on the Improvement of the Mind and Education of Youth* (Dove's English Classics, 1826). It is inscribed in Miss Wooler's handwriting, '*Prize for good conduct. Presented to Miss A. Brontë with Miss Wooler's kind love. Roe Head, December* 14, 1836.'

[2] Singularly little is known of Emily's stay at Miss Patchett's school, Law Hill, Southowram, near Halifax. She was a teacher there from September 1836 to March or April 1837. The house still stands, but it was larger than at present in Emily's time. Mr. Thomas Keyworth, writing in the *Bookman* (March 1893), informs us on the authority of a resident in the neighbourhood that:—'It was a famous school. The Miss Patchetts kept it as far back as I can remember anything, and I was born in 1818. There were two sisters, Elizabeth and Maria. Miss Maria was very gentle, but Miss Elizabeth was stately and austere. We always understood she knew how to keep things in order. Miss Maria got married, and went to live at Dewsbury. I think that would be previous to 1836. Then Miss Elizabeth kept on the school a few years, but not for long. She married Parson Hope, the vicar of St. Anne's, at Southowram, and the school was given up.'

Mr. Keyworth contends that Law Hill was the original Wuthering Heights of Emily's novel. It is clear, however, that Ponden House, near Haworth, did duty for at least the interior of Wuthering Heights, and that Oldfield, in the same district, was Thrushcross Grange.

support, if not entirely of that of all three, at least that of one or two; and, naturally, the lot devolved upon the elder ones to find some occupation which would enable them to do this. They knew that they were never likely to inherit much money. Mr. Brontë had but a small stipend, and was both charitable and liberal. Their aunt had an annuity of 50*l.*, but it reverted to others at her death, and her nieces had no right, and were the last persons in the world to reckon upon her savings. What could they do? Charlotte and Emily were trying teaching, and, as it seemed, without much success. The former, it is true, had the happiness of having a friend for her employer, and of being surrounded by those who knew her and loved her; but her salary was too small for her to save out of it; and her education did not entitle her to a larger. The sedentary and monotonous nature of the life, too, was preying upon her health and spirits, although, with necessity 'as her mistress,' she might hardly like to acknowledge this even to herself. But Emily —that free, wild, untameable spirit, never happy nor well but on the sweeping moors that gathered round her home—that hater of strangers, doomed to live amongst them, and not merely to live but to slave in their service—what Charlotte could have borne patiently for herself she could not bear for her sister. And yet what to do? She had once hoped that she herself might become an artist, and so earn her livelihood; but her eyes had failed her in the minute and useless labour which she had imposed upon herself with a view to this end.

It was the household custom among these girls to sew till nine o'clock at night. At that hour Miss Branwell generally went to bed, and her nieces' duties for the day were accounted done. They put away their work, and began to pace the room backwards and forwards, up and down—as often with the candles extinguished, for economy's sake, as not,—their figures glancing into the firelight, and out into the shadow, perpetually. At this time they talked over past cares and troubles; they planned for the future,

and consulted each other as to their plans. In after years this was the time for discussing together the plots of their novels. And again, still later, this was the time for the last surviving sister to walk alone, from old accustomed habit, round and round the desolate room, thinking sadly upon the 'days that were no more.' But this Christmas of 1836 was not without its hopes and daring aspirations. They had tried their hands at story-writing, in their miniature magazine, long ago; they all of them 'made out' perpetually. They had likewise attempted to write poetry, and had a modest confidence that they had achieved a tolerable success. But they knew that they might deceive themselves, and that sisters' judgments of each other's productions were likely to be too partial to be depended upon. So Charlotte, as the eldest, resolved to write to Southey. I believe (from an expression in a letter to be noticed hereafter) that she also consulted Coleridge; but I have not met with any part of that correspondence.

On December 29 her letter to Southey was despatched, and, from an excitement not unnatural in a girl who has worked herself up to the pitch of writing to a Poet Laureate and asking his opinion of her poems, she used some high-flown expressions, which, probably, gave him the idea that she was a romantic young lady, unacquainted with the realities of life.

This, most likely, was the first of those adventurous letters that passed through the little post-office of Haworth. Morning after morning of the holidays slipped away, and there was no answer; the sisters had to leave home, and Emily to return to her distasteful duties, without knowing even whether Charlotte's letter had ever reached its destination.

Not dispirited, however, by the delay, Branwell determined to try a similar venture, and addressed the following letter to Wordsworth. It was given by the poet to Mr. Quillinan[1] in 1850, after the name of Brontë had become

[1] Edward Quillinan (1791–1851) came of an Irish family, but was born at Oporto. Entered the British army as cornet of a cavalry regi-

known and famous. I have no means of ascertaining what answer was returned by Mr. Wordsworth; but that he considered the letter remarkable may, I think, be inferred both from its preservation and its recurrence to his memory when the real name of Currer Bell was made known to the public.[1]

'Haworth, near Bradford,
Yorkshire: January 19, 1837.

'Sir,—I most earnestly entreat you to read and pass your judgment upon what I have sent you, because from the day of my birth to this the nineteenth year of my life I have lived among secluded hills, where I could neither know what I was or what I could do. I read for the same reason that I ate or drank, because it was a real craving of nature. I wrote on the same principle as I spoke—out of the impulse and feelings of the mind; nor could I help it, for what came, came out, and there was the end of it. For as to self-conceit, that could not receive food from flattery, since to this hour not half a dozen people in the world know that I have ever penned a line.

'But a change has taken place now, sir; and I am arrived at an age wherein I must do something for myself; the powers I possess must be exercised to a definite end, and as I don't know them myself I must ask of others what they are worth. Yet there is not one here to tell me; and still, if they are worthless, time will henceforth be too precious to be wasted on them.

'Do pardon me, sir, that I have ventured to come before

ment. Wrote a satirical pamphlet in verse entitled *The Ball Room Votaries*, and in 1814 *Dunluce Castle*, and *Stanzas by the Author of 'Dunluce Castle.'* The *Retort Courteous* appeared in 1821, and a three-volume novel, *The Conspirators*, in the same year. Quillinan contributed to *Blackwood* and the *Quarterly*. He is remembered now mainly by his marriage with Dorothy Wordsworth, the daughter of the poet. She was married to Quillinan in 1841, and died at Rydal Mount in 1847.

[1] Somewhat earlier Branwell had begun to write appealing letters to the editor of *Blackwood's Magazine*, one bearing date January 9, 1837. Three of his letters are printed in Mrs. Oliphant's *William Blackwood and his Sons*.

one whose works I have most loved in our literature, and who most has been with me a divinity of the mind, laying before him one of my writings, and asking of him a judgment of its contents. I must come before some one from whose sentence there is no appeal; and such a one is he who has developed the theory of poetry as well as its practice, and both in such a way as to claim a place in the memory of a thousand years to come.

'My aim, sir, is to push out into the open world, and for this I trust not poetry alone; that might launch the vessel, but could not bear her on. Sensible and scientific prose, bold and vigorous efforts in my walk in life, would give a further title to the notice of the world; and then again poetry ought to brighten and crown that name with glory. But nothing of all this can be ever begun without means, and as I don't possess these I must in every shape strive to gain them. Surely, in this day, when there is not a *writing* poet worth a sixpence, the field must be open, if a better man can step forward.

'What I send you is the Prefatory Scene of a much longer subject, in which I have striven to develop strong passions and weak principles struggling with a high imagination and acute feelings, till, as youth hardens towards age, evil deeds and short enjoyments end in mental misery and bodily ruin. Now, to send you the whole of this would be a mock upon your patience; what you see does not even pretend to be more than the description of an imaginative child. But read it, sir; and, as you would hold a light to one in utter darkness—as you value your own kind-heartedness—*return* me an *answer*, if but one word, telling me whether I should write on, or write no more. Forgive undue warmth, because my feelings in this matter cannot be cool; and believe me, sir, with deep respect, your really humble servant, P. B. Brontë.'

The poetry enclosed seems to me by no means equal to parts of the letter; but, as every one likes to judge for him-

self, I copy the six opening stanzas—about a third of the whole, and certainly not the worst.

So where He reigns in glory bright,
Above those starry skies of night,
Amid His Paradise of light,
Oh, why may I not be?

Oft when awake on Christmas morn,
In sleepless twilight laid forlorn,
Strange thoughts have o'er my mind been borne,
How He has died for me;

And oft, within my chamber lying,
Have I awaked myself with crying
From dreams, where I beheld Him dying
Upon the accursed Tree;

And often has my mother said,
While on her lap I laid my head,
She feared for Time I was not made,
But for Eternity.

So 'I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
And let me bid farewell to fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes,'

I'll lay me down on this marble stone,
And set the world aside,
To see upon her ebon throne
The Moon in glory ride.

Soon after Charlotte returned to Dewsbury Moor she was distressed by hearing that her friend Ellen was likely to leave the neighbourhood for a considerable length of time.

'February 20.

'What shall I do without you? How long are we likely to be separated? Why are we to be denied each other's society? It is an inscrutable fatality. I long to be with you, because it seems as if two or three days, or weeks, spent in your company would beyond measure strengthen

me in the enjoyment of those feelings which I have so lately begun to cherish. You first pointed out to me the way in which I am so feebly endeavouring to travel, and now I cannot keep you by my side I must proceed sorrowfully alone. Why are we to be divided? Surely it must be because we are in danger of loving each other too well—of losing sight of the *Creator* in idolatry of the *creature*. At first I could not say "Thy will be done!" I felt rebellious, but I knew it was wrong to feel so. Being left a moment alone this morning, I prayed fervently to be enabled to resign myself to *every* decree of God's will, though it should be dealt forth by a far severer hand than the present disappointment; since then I have felt calmer and humbler, and consequently happier. Last Sunday I took up my Bible in a gloomy state of mind: I began to read—a feeling stole over me such as I have not known for many long years—a sweet, placid sensation, like those I remember, which used to visit me when I was a little child, and, on Sunday evenings in summer, stood by the open window reading the life of a certain French nobleman, who attained a purer and higher degree of sanctity than has been known since the days of the early martyrs.'

'Ellen's' residence was equally within a walk from Dewsbury Moor as it had been from Roe Head; and on Saturday afternoons both 'Mary' and she used to call upon Charlotte, and often endeavoured to persuade her to return with them, and be the guest of one of them till Monday morning; but this was comparatively seldom. Mary says, 'She visited us twice or thrice when she was at Miss Wooler's. We used to dispute about politics and religion. She, a Tory and clergyman's daughter, was always in a minority of one in our house of violent Dissent and Radicalism. She used to hear over again, delivered *with authority*, all the lectures I had been used to give her at school on despotic aristocracy, mercenary priesthood, &c. She had not energy to defend herself; sometimes she owned to a *little* truth in it, but

generally said nothing. Her feeble health gave her her yielding manner, for she could never oppose any one without gathering up all her strength for the struggle. Thus she would let me advise and patronise most imperiously, sometimes picking out any grain of sense there might be in what I said, but never allowing any one materially to interfere with her independence of thought and action. Though her silence sometimes left one under the impression that she agreed when she did not, she never gave a flattering opinion, and thus her words were golden, whether for praise or blame.'

'Mary's father was a man of remarkable intelligence, but of strong, not to say violent prejudices, all running in favour of Republicanism and Dissent. No other county but Yorkshire could have produced such a man. His brother had been a *détenu* in France, and had afterwards voluntarily taken up his residence there. Mr. T.[1] himself had been much abroad, both on business and to see the great Continental galleries of paintings. He spoke French perfectly, I have been told, when need was; but delighted usually in talking the broadest Yorkshire. He bought splendid engravings of the pictures which he particularly admired, and his house was full of works of art and of books; but he rather liked to present his rough side to any stranger or new-comer; he would speak his broadest, bring out his opinions on Church and State in their most startling forms, and, by-and-by, if he found his hearer could stand the shock, he would involuntarily show his warm, kind heart, and his true taste, and real refinement. His family of four sons and two daughters were brought up on Republican principles; independence of thought and action was encouraged; no

[1] Joshua Taylor (died 1840), the Mr. Yorke of *Shirley*, lost his money in his latter days; but all his financial engagements were met by his son Joshua, the 'Matthew Yorke' of *Shirley*, and, as we have seen, his surviving daughter, Mary, went to New Zealand to earn her living. The house of the Taylors was called the Red House, Gomersal. It stands on the highway from Gomersal to Bradford, a low wall with palisades separating its pleasant garden from the road.

'shams' tolerated. They are scattered far and wide: Martha, the younger daughter, sleeps in the Protestant cemetery at Brussels; Mary is in New Zealand; Mr. T. is dead. And so life and death have dispersed the circle of 'violent Radicals and Dissenters' into which, twenty years ago, the little, quiet, resolute clergyman's daughter was received, and by whom she was truly loved and honoured.

January and February of 1837 had passed away, and still there was no reply from Southey. Probably she had lost expectation and almost hope when at length, in the beginning of March, she received the letter inserted in Mr. C. C. Southey's Life of his father, vol. iv. p. 327.[1]

After accounting for his delay in replying to hers by the fact of a long absence from home, during which his letters had accumulated, whence 'it has lain unanswered till the last of a numerous file, not from disrespect or indifference to its contents, but because in truth it is not an easy task to answer it, nor a pleasant one to cast a damp over the high spirits and the generous desires of youth,' he goes on to say, 'What you are I can only infer from your letter, which appears to be written in sincerity, though I may suspect that you have used a fictitious signature. Be that as it may, the letter and the verses bear the same stamp, and I can well understand the state of mind they indicate.

. . . . . .

'It is not my advice that you have asked as to the direction of your talents, but my opinion of them, and yet the opinion may be worth little, and the advice much. You evidently possess, and in no inconsiderable degree, what Wordsworth calls the "faculty of verse." I am not depreciating it when I say that in these times it is not rare. Many volumes of poems are now published every year without

[1] Robert Southey (1774–1843), Poet Laureate. In 1837 he was in trouble, as he had just lost his wife. His *Life and Correspondence*, by his son Cuthbert, was published in 1849–50. Cuthbert Southey died in 1889.

attracting public attention, any one of which, if it had appeared half a century ago, would have obtained a high reputation for its author. Whoever, therefore, is ambitious of distinction in this way ought to be prepared for disappointment.

'But it is not with a view to distinction that you should cultivate this talent, if you consult your own happiness. I, who have made literature my profession, and devoted my life to it, and have never for a moment repented of the deliberate choice, think myself, nevertheless, bound in duty to caution every young man who applies as an aspirant to me for encouragement and advice against taking so perilous a course. You will say that a woman has no need of such a caution; there can be no peril in it for her. In a certain sense this is true; but there is a danger of which I would, with all kindness and all earnestness, warn you. The day dreams in which you habitually indulge are likely to induce a distempered state of mind; and, in proportion as all the ordinary uses of the world seem to you flat and unprofitable, you will be unfitted for them without becoming fitted for anything else. Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it, even as an accomplishment and a recreation. To those duties you have not yet been called, and when you are you will be less eager for celebrity. You will not seek in imagination for excitement, of which the vicissitudes of this life, and the anxieties from which you must not hope to be exempted, be your state what it may, will bring with them but too much.

'But do not suppose that I disparage the gift which you possess, nor that I would discourage you from exercising it. I only exhort you so to think of it, and so to use it, as to render it conducive to your own permanent good. Write poetry for its own sake; not in a spirit of emulation, and not with a view to celebrity; the less you aim at that the more likely you will be to deserve and finally to obtain it.

So written it is wholesome both for the heart and soul; it may be made the surest means, next to religion, of soothing the mind and elevating it. You may embody in it your best thoughts and your wisest feelings, and in so doing discipline and strengthen them.

'Farewell, madam. It is not because I have forgotten that I was once young myself that I write to you in this strain, but because I remember it. You will neither doubt my sincerity nor my good-will; and however ill what has here been said may accord with your present views and temper, the longer you live the more reasonable it will appear to you. Though I may be an ungracious adviser, you will allow me, therefore, to subscribe myself, with the best wishes for your happiness here and hereafter, your friend, ROBERT SOUTHEY.'

I was with Miss Brontë when she received Mr. Cuthbert Southey's note, requesting her permission to insert the foregoing letter in his father's Life. She said to me, 'Mr. Southey's letter was kind and admirable; a little stringent, but it did me good.'

It is partly because I think it so admirable, and partly because it tends to bring out her character, as shown in the following reply, that I have taken the liberty of inserting the foregoing extracts from it.

'March 16.

'Sir,—I cannot rest till I have answered your letter, even though by addressing you a second time I should appear a little intrusive; but I must thank you for the kind and wise advice you have condescended to give me. I had not ventured to hope for such a reply; so considerate in its tone, so noble in its spirit. I must suppress what I feel, or you will think me foolishly enthusiastic.

'At the first perusal of your letter I felt only shame and regret that I had ever ventured to trouble you with my crude rhapsody; I felt a painful heat rise to my face when I thought of the quires of paper I had covered with what once

gave me so much delight, but which now was only a source of confusion; but after I had thought a little, and read it again and again, the prospect seemed to clear. You do not forbid me to write; you do not say that what I write is utterly destitute of merit. You only warn me against the folly of neglecting real duties for the sake of imaginative pleasures; of writing for the love of fame; for the selfish excitement of emulation. You kindly allow me to write poetry for its own sake, provided I leave undone nothing which I ought to do, in order to pursue that single, absorbing, exquisite gratification. I am afraid, sir, you think me very foolish. I know the first letter I wrote to you was all senseless trash from beginning to end; but I am not altogether the idle dreaming being it would seem to denote. My father is a clergyman of limited though competent income, and I am the eldest of his children. He expended quite as much in my education as he could afford in justice to the rest. I thought it therefore my duty, when I left school, to become a governess. In that capacity I find enough to occupy my thoughts all day long, and my head and hands too, without having a moment's time for one dream of the imagination. In the evenings, I confess, I do think, but I never trouble any one else with my thoughts. I carefully avoid any appearance of preoccupation and eccentricity, which might lead those I live amongst to suspect the nature of my pursuits. Following my father's advice—who from my childhood has counselled me, just in the wise and friendly tone of your letter—I have endeavoured not only attentively to observe all the duties a woman ought to fulfil, but to feel deeply interested in them. I don't always succeed, for sometimes when I'm teaching or sewing I would rather be reading or writing; but I try to deny myself; and my father's approbation amply rewarded me for the privation. Once more allow me to thank you with sincere gratitude. I trust I shall never more feel ambitious to see my name in print; if the wish should rise, I'll look at Southey's letter, and suppress it. It is honour enough for me that I have written to

him, and received an answer. That letter is consecrated; no one shall ever see it but papa and my brother and sisters. Again I thank you. This incident, I suppose, will be renewed no more; if I live to be an old woman, I shall remember it thirty years hence as a bright dream. The signature which you suspected of being fictitious is my real name. Again, therefore, I must sign myself

'C. Brontë.'

'P.S.—Pray, sir, excuse me for writing to you a second time; I could not help writing, partly to tell you how thankful I am for your kindness, and partly to let you know that your advice shall not be wasted, however sorrowfully and reluctantly it may at first be followed. C. B.'

I cannot deny myself the gratification of inserting Southey's reply:—

'Keswick: March 22, 1837.

'Dear Madam,—Your letter has given me great pleasure, and I should not forgive myself if I did not tell you so. You have received admonition as considerately and as kindly as it was given. Let me now request that, if you ever should come to these Lakes while I am living here, you will let me see you. You would then think of me afterwards with the more good-will, because you would perceive that there is neither severity nor moroseness in the state of mind to which years and observation have brought me.

'It is, by God's mercy, in our power to attain a degree of self-government, which is essential to our own happiness, and contributes greatly to that of those around us. Take care of over-excitement, and endeavour to keep a quiet mind (even for your health it is the best advice that can be given you): your moral and spiritual improvement will then keep pace with the culture of your intellectual powers.

'And now, madam, God bless you!

'Farewell, and believe me to be your sincere friend,

'Robert Southey.'

Of this second letter, also, she spoke, and told me that it contained an invitation for her to go and see the poet if ever she visited the Lakes. 'But there was no money to spare,' said she, 'nor any prospect of my ever earning money enough to have the chance of so great a pleasure, so I gave up thinking of it.' At the time we conversed together on the subject we were at the Lakes. But Southey was dead.

This 'stringent' letter made her put aside, for a time, all idea of literary enterprise. She bent her whole energy towards the fulfilment of the duties in hand; but her occupation was not sufficient food for her great forces of intellect, and they cried out perpetually, 'Give, give,' while the comparatively less breezy air of Dewsbury Moor told upon her health and spirits more and more. On August 27, 1837, she writes—

'I am again at Dewsbury,[1] engaged in the old business—teach, teach, teach. . . . *When will you come home?* Make haste! You have been at Bath long enough for all purposes; by this time you have acquired polish enough, I am sure; if the varnish is laid on much thicker, I am afraid the good wood underneath will be quite concealed, and your Yorkshire friends won't stand that. Come, come. I am getting really tired of your absence. Saturday after Saturday comes round, and I can have no hope of hearing your knock at the door, and then being told that "Miss Ellen is come." Oh, dear! in this monotonous life of mine that was a pleasant event. I wish it would recur again; but it will take two or three interviews before the stiffness—the estrangement of this long separation—will wear away.'[2]

[1] Miss Wooler's school was called Heald's House, Dewsbury Moor. It was near Squirrel Hall, where Hammond Roberson had his first residence and school. The house is rather a noteworthy one, having been used by the followers of George Fox as a meeting-place, and it was the birthplace of the Rev. W. M. Heald, who shared with his son some of the characteristics of the Rev. Cyril Hall of *Shirley* (*The Brontë Country*, by J. A. Erskine Stuart).

[2] Another extract from the same letter was as follows: -

About this time she forgot to return a work-bag she had borrowed, by a messenger, and in repairing her error she says, 'These aberrations of memory warn me pretty intelligibly that I am getting past my prime.' Ætat. 21! And the same tone of despondency runs through the following letter:—

'I wish exceedingly that I could come to you before Christmas, but it is impossible; another three weeks must elapse before I shall again have my comforter beside me, under the roof of my own dear quiet home. If I could always live with you, and daily read the Bible with you—if your lips and mine could at the same time drink the same draught, from the same pure fountain of mercy—I hope, I trust, I might one day become better, far better than my evil, wandering thoughts, my corrupt heart, cold to the spirit and warm to the flesh, will now permit me to be. I often plan the pleasant life which we might lead together, strengthening each other in that power of self-denial, that hallowed and glowing devotion, which the first saints of God often attained to. My eyes fill with tears when I contrast the bliss of such a state, brightened by hopes of the future, with the melancholy state I now live in, uncertain that I ever felt true contrition, wandering in thought and deed, longing for holiness, which I shall *never*, *never* obtain, smitten at times to the heart with the conviction that[1] ghastly Calvinistic doctrines are true—darkened, in short, by the very shadows of spiritual death. If Christian perfection be necessary to salvation, I shall never be saved; my heart is a very hotbed for sinful thoughts, and when I decide on an action I scarcely remember to look to my Redeemer for

'Miss Eliza Wooler and Mrs. Wooler are coming here next Christmas. Miss Wooler will then relinquish the school in favour of her sister Eliza, but I am happy to say worthy Miss Wooler will continue to reside in the house. I should be sorry indeed to part with her.'

[1] In the original letter the name is erased, but it stands '——'s ghastly Calvinistic doctrines.'

direction. I know not how to pray; I cannot bend my life to the grand end of doing good; I go on constantly seeking my own pleasure, pursuing the gratification of my own desires. I forget God, and will not God forget me? And, meantime, I know the greatness of Jehovah; I acknowledge the perfection of His word; I adore the purity of the Christian faith my theory is right, my practice horribly wrong.'

The Christmas holidays came, and she and Anne returned to the parsonage, and to that happy home circle in which alone their natures expanded; amongst all other people they shrivelled up more or less. Indeed, there were only one or two strangers who could be admitted among the sisters without producing the same result. Emily and Anne were bound up in their lives and interests like twins. The former from reserve, the latter from timidity, avoided all friendships and intimacies beyond their family. Emily was impervious to influence; she never came in contact with public opinion, and her own decision of what was right and fitting was a law for her conduct and appearance, with which she allowed no one to interfere. Her love was poured out on Anne, as Charlotte's was on her. But the affection among all the three was stronger than either death or life.

'Ellen' was eagerly welcomed by Charlotte, freely admitted by Emily, and kindly received by Anne, whenever she could visit them; and this Christmas she had promised to do so, but her coming had to be delayed on account of a little domestic accident detailed in the following letter:—

'December 29, 1837.

'I am sure you will have thought me very remiss in not sending my promised letter long before now; but I have a sufficient and very melancholy excuse in an accident that befell our old faithful Tabby, a few days after my return home. She was gone out into the village on some errand, when, as she was descending the steep street, her foot slipped on the

ice, and she fell: it was dark, and no one saw her mischance, till after a time her groans attracted the attention of a passer-by. She was lifted up and carried into the druggist's near; and, after the examination, it was discovered that she had completely shattered and dislocated one leg. Unfortunately, the fracture could not be set till six o'clock the next morning, as no surgeon was to be had before that time, and she now lies at our house in a very doubtful and dangerous state. Of course we are all exceedingly distressed at the circumstance, for she was like one of our own family. Since the event we have been almost without assistance—a person has dropped in now and then to do the drudgery, but we have as yet been able to procure no regular servant; and consequently the whole work of the house, as well as the additional duty of nursing Tabby, falls on ourselves. Under these circumstances I dare not press your visit here, at least until she is pronounced out of danger; it would be too selfish of me. Aunt wished me to give you this information before, but papa and all the rest were anxious I should delay until we saw whether matters took a more settled aspect, and I myself kept putting it off from day to day, most bitterly reluctant to give up all the pleasure I had anticipated so long. However, remembering what you told me, namely, that you had commended the matter to a higher decision than ours, and that you were resolved to submit with resignation to that decision, whatever it might be, I hold it my duty to yield also, and to be silent; it may be all for the best. I fear, if you had been here during this severe weather, your visit would have been of no advantage to you, for the moors are blockaded with snow, and you would never have been able to get out. After this disappointment I never dare reckon with certainty on the enjoyment of a pleasure again; it seems as if some fatality stood between you and me. I am not good enough for you, and you must be kept from the contamination of too intimate society. I would urge your visit yet—I would entreat and press it—but the thought comes across me, should Tabby die while you are in the

house, I should never forgive myself. No! it must not be, and in a thousand ways the consciousness of that mortifies and disappoints me most keenly, and I am not the only one who is disappointed. All in the house were looking to your visit with eagerness. Papa says he highly approves of my friendship with you, and he wishes me to continue it through life.'

A good neighbour of the Brontës—a clever, intelligent Yorkshire woman, who keeps a druggist's shop in Haworth,[1] and, from her occupation, her experience, and excellent sense, holds the position of village doctoress and nurse, and, as such, has been a friend, in many a time of trial, and sickness, and death in the households round—told me a characteristic little incident connected with Tabby's fractured leg. Mr. Brontë is truly generous and regardful of all deserving claims. Tabby had lived with them for ten or twelve years, and was, as Charlotte expressed it, 'one of the family.' But, on the other hand, she was past the age for any very active service, being nearer seventy than sixty at the time of the accident; she had a sister living in the village, and the savings she had accumulated, during many years' service, formed a competency for one in her rank of life. Or if, in this time of sickness, she fell short of any comforts which her state rendered necessary, the parsonage could supply them. So reasoned Miss Branwell, the prudent, not to say anxious aunt, looking to the limited contents of Mr. Brontë's purse, and the unprovided-for future of her nieces, who were, moreover, losing the relaxation of the holidays, in close attendance upon Tabby.[2]

[1] This was Elizabeth Hardaker, who was always known in Haworth as 'Betty.' Her brother, Ben Hardaker, went to live in Bradford, and published a volume of verse there in 1874. 'Betty' was called in to see Charlotte during her last illness. She died in 1888.

[2] Tabby died only a month before her young mistress. Her grave, which is very near to the wall that separates the parsonage from the churchyard, is inscribed—

'*Tabitha Aykroyd, of Haworth, who died Feb.* 17*th*, 1855, *in the* 85*th year of her age.*'

Miss Branwell urged her views upon Mr. Brontë as soon as the immediate danger to the old servant's life was over. He refused at first to listen to the careful advice; it was repugnant to his liberal nature. But Miss Branwell persevered; urged economical motives; pressed on his love for his daughters. He gave way. Tabby was to be removed to her sister's, and there nursed and cared for, Mr. Brontë coming in with his aid when her own resources fell short. This decision was communicated to the girls. There were symptoms of a quiet but sturdy rebellion, that winter afternoon, in the small precincts of Haworth Parsonage. They made one unanimous and stiff remonstrance. Tabby had tended them in their childhood; they, and none other, should tend her in her infirmity and age. At tea-time they were sad and silent, and the meal went away untouched by any of the three. So it was at breakfast; they did not waste many words on the subject, but each word they did utter was weighty. They 'struck' eating till the resolution was rescinded, and Tabby was allowed to remain a helpless invalid entirely dependent upon them. Herein was the strong feeling of Duty being paramount to pleasure, which lay at the foundation of Charlotte's character, made most apparent; for we have seen how she yearned for her friend's company: but it was to be obtained only by shrinking from what she esteemed right, and that she never did, whatever might be the sacrifice.

She had another weight on her mind this Christmas. I have said that the air of Dewsbury Moor did not agree with her, though she herself was hardly aware how much her life there was affecting her health. But Anne had begun to suffer just before the holidays, and Charlotte watched over her younger sisters with the jealous vigilance of some wild creature, that changes her very nature if danger threatens her young. Anne had a slight cough, a pain at her side, a difficulty of breathing. Miss Wooler considered it as little more than a common cold; but Charlotte felt every indication of incipient consumption as a stab at her heart, remem-

bering Maria and Elizabeth, whose places once knew them, and should know them no more.

Stung by anxiety for this little sister, she upbraided Miss Wooler for her fancied indifference to Anne's state of health. Miss Wooler felt these reproaches keenly, and wrote to Mr. Brontë about them. He immediately replied most kindly, expressing his fear that Charlotte's apprehensions and anxieties respecting her sister had led her to give utterance to over-excited expressions of alarm. Through Miss Wooler's kind consideration Anne was a year longer at school than her friends intended. At the close of the half-year Miss Wooler sought for the opportunity of an explanation of each other's words, and the issue proved that 'the falling out of faithful friends renewing is of love.' And so ended the first, last, and only difference Charlotte ever had with good, kind Miss Wooler.

Still her heart had received a shock in the perception of Anne's delicacy; and all these holidays she watched over her with the longing, fond anxiety which is so full of sudden pangs of fear.

Emily had given up her situation in the Halifax school at the expiration of six months of arduous trial, on account of her health, which could only be re-established by the bracing moorland air and free life of home. Tabby's illness had preyed on the family resources. I doubt whether Branwell was maintaining himself at this time. For some unexplained reason he had given up the idea of becoming a student of painting at the Royal Academy, and his prospects in life were uncertain, and had yet to be settled. So Charlotte had quietly to take up her burden of teaching again, and return to her previous monotonous life.

Brave heart, ready to die in harness! She went back to her work, and made no complaint, hoping to subdue the weakness that was gaining ground upon her. About this time she would turn sick and trembling at any sudden noise, and could hardly repress her screams when startled. This showed a fearful degree of physical weakness in one who

was generally so self-controlled; and the medical man, whom at length, through Miss Wooler's entreaty, she was led to consult, insisted on her return to the parsonage. She had led too sedentary a life, he said; and the soft summer air, blowing round her home, the sweet company of those she loved, the release, the freedom of life in her own family, were needed to save either reason or life. So, as One higher than she had overruled that for a time she might relax her strain, she returned to Haworth; and, after a season of utter quiet, her father sought for her the enlivening society of her two friends Mary and Martha (Taylor). At the conclusion of the following letter, written to the then absent 'Ellen,' there is, I think, as pretty a glimpse of a merry group of young people as need be; and, like all descriptions of doing, as distinct from thinking or feeling, in letters, it saddens one in proportion to the vivacity of the picture of what was once, and is now utterly swept away.

Haworth: June 9, 1838.

'I received your packet of despatches on Wednesday; it was brought me by Mary and Martha, who have been staying at Haworth for a few days; they leave us to-day. You will be surprised at the date of this letter. I ought to be at Dewsbury Moor, you know; but I stayed as long as I was able, and at length I neither could nor dared stay any longer. My health and spirits had utterly failed me, and the medical man whom I consulted enjoined me, as I valued my life, to go home. So home I went, and the change has at once roused and soothed me; and I am now, I trust, fairly in the way to be myself again.

'A calm and even mind like yours cannot conceive the feelings of the shattered wretch who is now writing to you, when, after weeks of mental and bodily anguish not to be described, something like peace began to dawn again. Mary Taylor is far from well. She breathes short, has a pain in her chest, and frequent flushings of fever. I cannot tell you what agony these symptoms give me; they remind me too strongly of my two sisters, whom no power of medicine

could save. Martha is now very well; she has kept in a continual flow of good humour during her stay here, and has consequently been very fascinating. . . .

'They are making such a noise about me I cannot write any more. Mary is playing on the piano; Martha is chattering as fast as her little tongue can run; and Branwell is standing before her, laughing at her vivacity.'

Charlotte grew much stronger in this quiet, happy period at home. She paid occasional visits to her two great friends, and they in return came to Haworth. At one of their houses, I suspect, she met with the person to whom the following letter refers—some one having a slight resemblance to the character of 'St. John' in the last volume of 'Jane Eyre,' and, like him, in holy orders.[1]

[1] This was the Rev. Henry Nussey, the brother of her friend. Miss Brontë's letter to Ellen Nussey from which Mrs. Gaskell extracted the above passage contained also the following:—

'You ask me, my dear Ellen, whether I have received a letter from Henry. I have, about a week since. The contents, I confess, did a little surprise me, but I kept them to myself, and unless you had questioned me on the subject I would never have adverted to it. Henry says he is comfortably settled at Donnington, that his health is much improved, and that it is his intention to take pupils after Easter. He then intimates that in due time he should want a wife to take care of his pupils, and frankly asks me to be that wife. Altogether the letter is written without cant or flattery, and in a common-sense style, which does credit to his judgment.

'Now, my dear Ellen, there were in this proposal some things which might have proved a strong temptation. I thought if I were to marry Henry Nussey his sister could live with me, and how happy I should be. But again I asked myself two questions: Do I love him as much as a woman ought to love the man she marries? Am I the person best qualified to make him happy? Alas! Ellen, my conscience answered *no* to both these questions.'

Henry Nussey was at this time a curate at Donnington, in Sussex. He afterwards became rector of Earnley, near Chichester, and later of Hathersage, in Derbyshire. Miss Brontë, in refusing the proposed offer of marriage, suggested certain characteristics which she declared were desirable in the wife of a clergyman. Six months later Mr. Nussey wrote

'March 12, 1839.

'. . . I had a kindly leaning towards him, because he is an amiable and well-disposed man. Yet I had not, and could not have, that intense attachment which would make me willing to die for him; and if ever I marry it must be in that light of adoration that I will regard my husband. Ten to one I shall never have the chance again; but *n'importe*. Moreover, I was aware that he knew so little of me he could hardly be conscious to whom he was writing. Why! it would startle him to see me in my natural home character; he would think I was a wild, romantic enthusiast indeed. I could not sit all day long making a grave face before my husband. I would laugh, and satirise, and say whatever came into my head first. And if he were a clever man, and loved me, the whole world, weighed in the balance against his smallest wish, should be light as air.'

So that—her first proposal of marriage—was quietly declined and put on one side. Matrimony did not enter into the scheme of her life, but good, sound, earnest labour did; the question, however, was as yet undecided in what direction she should employ her forces. She had been discouraged in literature; her eyes failed her in the minute kind of drawing which she practised when she wanted to express an idea; teaching seemed to her at this time, as it does to most women at all times, the only way of earning an independent livelihood. But neither she nor her sisters were naturally fond of children. The hieroglyphics of childhood were an unknown language to them, for they had never been much with those younger than themselves. I am inclined to think, too, that they had not the happy knack of imparting information, which seems to be a separate gift from the faculty of acquiring it; a kind of sympathetic tact, which instinctively perceives the difficulties that impede comprehension in a child's mind, and that yet are too vague

to inform her of his engagement to another, and Charlotte Brontë replied in a letter of considerable length.

and unformed for it, with its half-developed powers of expression, to explain by words. Consequently, teaching very young children was anything but a 'delightful task' to the three Brontë sisters. With older girls, verging on womanhood, they might have done better, especially if these had any desire for improvement. But the education which the village clergyman's daughters had received, did not as yet qualify them to undertake the charge of advanced pupils. They knew but little French, and were not proficients in music; I doubt whether Charlotte could play at all. But they were all strong again, and, at any rate, Charlotte and Anne must put their shoulders to the wheel. One daughter was needed at home, to stay with Mr. Brontë and Miss Branwell; to be the young and active member in a household of four, whereof three—the father, the aunt, and faithful Tabby—were past middle age. And Emily, who suffered and drooped more than her sisters when away from Haworth, was the one appointed to remain. Anne was the first to meet with a situation.

'April 15, 1839.

'I could not write to you in the week you requested, as about that time we were very busy in preparing for Anne's departure.[1] Poor child! she left us last Monday; no one went with her; it was her own wish that she might be allowed to go alone, as she thought she could manage better and summon more courage if thrown entirely upon her own resources. We have had one letter from her since she went. She expresses herself very well satisfied, and says that Mrs. Ingham is extremely kind; the two eldest children alone are under her care, the rest are confined to the nursery, with which and its occupants she has nothing to do. . . . I hope she'll do. You would be astonished what a sensible, clever letter she writes; it is only the talking part that I fear. But I do seriously apprehend that Mrs.

[1] Anne went to Mrs. Ingham at Blake Hall, Mirfield, some three miles from Heckmondwike, Yorks. A branch of the family still occupies the place, a pleasant mansion situated in a park.

Ingham will sometimes conclude that she has a natural impediment in her speech. For my own part, I am as yet "wanting a situation," like a housemaid out of place. By the way, I have lately discovered I have quite a talent for cleaning, sweeping up hearths, dusting rooms, making beds, &c.; so, if everything else fails, I can turn my hand to that, if anybody will give me good wages for little labour. I won't be a cook; I hate cooking. I won't be a nursery-maid, nor a lady's maid, far less a lady's companion, or a mantua-maker, or a straw-bonnet maker, or a taker-in of plain work. I won't be anything but a housemaid. . . . With regard to my visit to Gomersal, I have as yet received no invitation; but if I should be asked, though I should feel it a great act of self-denial to refuse, yet I have almost made up my mind to do so, though the society of the Taylors is one of the most rousing pleasures I have ever known. Good-bye, my darling Ellen, &c.

'P.S.—Strike out that word "darling;" it is humbug. Where's the use of protestations? We've known each other, and liked each other, a good while; that's enough.'

Not many weeks after this was written Charlotte also became engaged as a governess. I intend carefully to abstain from introducing the names of any living people, respecting whom I may have to tell unpleasant truths, or to quote severe remarks from Miss Brontë's letters; but it is necessary that the difficulties she had to encounter in her various phases of life should be fairly and frankly made known, before the force 'of what was resisted' can be at all understood. I was once speaking to her about 'Agnes Grey'—the novel in which her sister Anne pretty literally describes her own experience as a governess—and alluding more particularly to the account of the stoning of the little nestlings in the presence of the parent birds. She said that none but those who had been in the position of a governess could ever realise the dark side of 'respectable' human nature; under

no great temptation to crime, but daily giving way to selfishness and ill-temper, till its conduct towards those dependent on it sometimes amounts to a tyranny of which one would rather be the victim than the inflictor. We can only trust in such cases that the employers err rather from a density of perception, and an absence of sympathy, than from any natural cruelty of disposition. Among several things of the same kind, which I well remember, she told me what had once occurred to herself. She had been entrusted with the care of a little boy, three or four years old, during the absence of his parents on a day's excursion, and particularly enjoined to keep him out of the stable yard. His elder brother, a lad of eight or nine, and not a pupil of Miss Brontë, tempted the little fellow into the forbidden place. She followed, and tried to induce him to come away; but, instigated by his brother, he began throwing stones at her, and one of them hit her so severe a blow on the temple that the lads were alarmed into obedience. The next day, in full family conclave, the mother asked Miss Brontë what occasioned the mark on her forehead. She simply replied, 'An accident, ma'am,' and no further inquiry was made; but the children (both brothers and sisters) had been present, and honoured her for not 'telling tales.' From that time she began to obtain influence over all, more or less, according to their different characters; and, as she insensibly gained their affection, her own interest in them was increasing. But one day, at the children's dinner, the small truant of the stable yard, in a little demonstrative gush, said, putting his hand in hers, 'I love 'ou, Miss Brontë;' whereupon the mother exclaimed, before all the children, 'Love the *governess*, my dear!'

The family into which she first entered was, I believe, that of a wealthy Yorkshire manufacturer.[1] The following

[1] Mr. John Sidgwick. Mr. A. C. Benson says (*The Life of Edward White Benson, sometime Archbishop of Canterbury*):—'Charlotte Brontë acted as governess to my cousins at Stonegappe for a few months in 1839. Few traditions of her connection with the Sidgwicks survive.

extracts from her correspondence at this time will show how painfully the restraint of her new mode of life pressed upon her. The first is from a letter to Emily, beginning with one of the tender expressions in which, in spite of 'humbug,' she indulged herself. 'Mine dear love,' 'Mine bonnie love' are her terms of address to this beloved sister.

'June 8, 1839.

'I have striven hard to be pleased with my new situation. The country, the house, and the grounds are, as I have said, divine; but, alack-a-day! there is such a thing as seeing all beautiful around you—pleasant woods, white paths, green lawns, and blue sunshiny sky—and not having a free moment or a free thought left to enjoy them. The children are constantly with me. As for correcting them, I quickly found that was out of the question; they are to do as they like. A complaint to the mother only brings black looks on myself, and unjust partial excuses to screen the children. I have tried that plan once, and succeeded so notably I shall try no more. I said in my last letter that Mrs. (Sidgwick) did not know me. I now begin to find she does not intend to know me; that she cares nothing about me, except to contrive how the greatest possible quantity of labour may be got out of me; and to that end she overwhelms me with oceans of needle-work; yards of cambric to hem, muslin nightcaps to make, and, above all things, dolls to dress. I do not think she likes me at all, because I can't help being shy in such an entirely novel scene, surrounded as I have

She was, according to her own account, very unkindly treated, but it is clear that she had no gifts for the management of children, and was also in a very morbid condition the whole time. My cousin Benson Sidgwick, now vicar of Ashby Parva, certainly on one occasion threw a Bible at Miss Brontë! and all that another cousin can recollect of her is that if she was invited to walk to church with them, she thought she was being ordered about like a slave; if she was not invited, she imagined she was excluded from the family circle. Both Mr. and Mrs. John Sidgwick were extraordinarily benevolent people, much beloved, and would not wittingly have given pain to any one connected with them.'

hitherto been by strange and constantly changing faces. . . . I used to think I should like to be in the stir of grand folks' society; but I have had enough of it—it is dreary work to look on and listen. I see more clearly than I have ever done before that a private governess has no existence, is not considered as a living rational being, except as connected with the wearisome duties she has to fulfil. . . . One of the pleasantest afternoons I have spent here—indeed, the only one at all pleasant—was when Mr. (Sidgwick) walked out with his children, and I had orders to follow a little behind. As he strolled on through his fields, with his magnificent Newfoundland dog at his side, he looked very like what a frank, wealthy Conservative gentleman ought to be. He spoke freely and unaffectedly to the people he met, and, though he indulged his children and allowed them to tease himself far too much, he would not suffer them grossly to insult others.'

(WRITTEN IN PENCIL TO A FRIEND.[1])

'July 1839.

'I cannot procure ink without going into the drawing-room, where I do not wish to go. . . . I should have written to you long since, and told you every detail of the utterly new scene into which I have lately been cast, had I not been daily expecting a letter from yourself, and wondering and lamenting that you did not write; for you will remember it was your turn. I must not bother you too much with my sorrows, of which, I fear, you heard an exaggerated account. If you were near me, perhaps I might be tempted to tell you all, to grow egotistical, and pour out the long history of a private governess's trials and crosses in her first situation. As it is I will only ask you to imagine the miseries of a reserved wretch like me, thrown at once into the midst of a large family, at a time when they were particularly gay—when the house was filled with company—all strangers—people whose faces I had never seen before. In this state I had charge given me of a set of pampered,

[1] Ellen Nussey.

spoilt, turbulent children, whom I was expected constantly to amuse as well as to instruct. I soon found that the constant demand on my stock of animal spirits reduced them to the lowest state of exhaustion; at times I felt—and, I suppose, seemed—depressed. To my astonishment I was taken to task on the subject by Mrs. (Sidgwick) with a sternness of manner and a harshness of language scarcely credible; like a fool, I cried most bitterly. I could not help it; my spirits quite failed me at first. I thought I had done my best—strained every nerve to please her; and to be treated in that way, merely because I was shy and sometimes melancholy, was too bad. At first I was for giving all up and going home. But, after a little reflection, I determined to summon what energy I had and to weather the storm. I said to myself, "I have never yet quitted a place without gaining a friend; adversity is a good school; the poor are born to labour, and the dependent to endure." I resolved to be patient, to command my feelings, and to take what came; the ordeal, I reflected, would not last many weeks, and I trusted it would do me good. I recollected the fable of the willow and the oak; I bent quietly, and now, I trust, the storm is blowing over me. Mrs. (Sidgwick) is generally considered an agreeable woman; so she is, I doubt not, in general society. She behaves somewhat more civilly to me now than she did at first, and the children are a little more manageable; but she does not know my character, and she does not wish to know it. I have never had five minutes' conversation with her since I came, except while she was scolding me. I have no wish to be pitied, except by yourself; if I were talking to you I could tell you much more.'

(TO EMILY, ABOUT THIS TIME.)

'Mine bonnie love, I was as glad of your letter as tongue can express: it is a real, genuine pleasure to hear from home; a thing to be saved till bedtime, when one has a moment's quiet and rest to enjoy it thoroughly. Write whenever you can. I could like to be at home. I could like to work in a

mill. I could like to feel some mental liberty. I could like this weight of restraint to be taken off. But the holidays will come. Coraggio.'

Her temporary engagement in this uncongenial family ended in the July of this year; not before the constant strain upon her spirits and strength had again affected her health; but when this delicacy became apparent in palpitations and shortness of breathing it was treated as affectation—as a phase of imaginary indisposition, which could be dissipated by a good scolding. She had been brought up rather in a school of Spartan endurance than in one of maudlin self-indulgence, and could bear many a pain and relinquish many a hope in silence.

After she had been at home about a week, her friend proposed that she should accompany her in some little excursion, having pleasure alone for its object. She caught at the idea most eagerly at first; but her hope stood still, waned, and had almost disappeared before, after many delays, it was realised. In its fulfilment at last it was a favourable specimen of many a similar air-bubble dancing before her eyes in her brief career, in which stern realities, rather than pleasures, formed the leading incidents.

'July 26, 1839.

'Your proposal has almost driven me "clean daft." If you don't understand that ladylike expression you must ask me what it means when I see you. The fact is, an excursion with you anywhere, whether to Cleathorpe or Canada, just by ourselves, would be to me most delightful. I should indeed like to go; but I can't get leave of absence for longer than a week, and I'm afraid that would not suit you. Must I, then, give it up entirely? I feel as if I *could not*. I never had such a chance of enjoyment before; I do want to see you and talk to you, and be with you. When do you wish to go? Could I meet you at Leeds? To take a gig from Haworth to B(irstall) would be to me a very serious increase of expense, and I happen to be very low in cash.

Oh! rich people seem to have many pleasures at their command which we are debarred from! However, no repining.

'Say when you go, and I shall be able in my answer to say decidedly whether I can accompany you or not. I must —I will—I'm set upon it—I'll be obstinate and bear down all opposition.

'P.S.—Since writing the above I find that aunt and papa have determined to go to Liverpool for a fortnight, and take us all with them. It is stipulated, however, that I should give up the Cleathorpe scheme. I yield reluctantly.'[1]

I fancy that, about this time, Mr. Brontë found it necessary, either from failing health or the increased populousness of the parish, to engage the assistance of a curate.[2] At least it is in a letter written this summer that I find mention of the first of a succession of curates, who henceforward revolved round Haworth Parsonage, and made an impression on the mind of one of its inmates which she has conveyed pretty distinctly to the world. The Haworth

[1] 'But'—the letter continues—'aunt suggests that you may be able to join us at Liverpool. What do you say? We shall not go for a fortnight or three weeks, because till that time papa's expected assistant will not be ready to undertake his duties.' The 'expected assistant' was Mr. William Weightman.

[2] Mr. Brontë's curates were five in number—

1. Mr. William Hodgson, 1837–8.
2. Mr. William Weightman, 1839–42.
3. Mr. Peter Augustus Smith, 1842–4.
4. Mr. Arthur Bell Nicholls, 1844–53.
5. Mr. De Renzi, 1853–4.
6. Mr. Arthur Bell Nicholls, 1854–61.

Mr. Hodgson's position must have been somewhat different from that of his successors, as Mr. Brontë, in a funeral sermon on Mr. Weightman, which he preached in Haworth Parish Church on October 2, 1842, referred to *permanent* assistance having first been given to him by his Bishop in the person of Mr. Weightman. Mr. Hodgson probably volunteered for a few months before obtaining a more important charge.

curate brought his clerical friends and neighbours about the place, and for a time the incursions of these, near the parsonage tea-time, formed occurrences by which the quietness of the life there was varied, sometimes pleasantly, sometimes disagreeably. The little adventure recorded at the end of the letter on page 178 is uncommon in the lot of most women, and is a testimony in this case to the unusual power of attraction—though so plain in feature—which Charlotte possessed, when she let herself go in the happiness and freedom of home.

'August 4, 1839.

'The Liverpool journey is yet a matter of talk, a sort of castle in the air; but, between you and me, I fancy it is very doubtful whether it will ever assume a more solid shape. Aunt—like many other elderly people—likes to talk of such things; but when it comes to putting them into actual execution she rather falls off. Such being the case, I think you and I had better adhere to our first plan of going somewhere together independently of other people. I have got leave to accompany you for a week—at the utmost a fortnight—but no more. Where do you wish to go? Burlington, I should think, from what Mary says, would be as eligible a place as any. When do you set off? Arrange all these things according to your convenience; I shall start no objections. The idea of seeing the *sea*—of being near it—watching its changes by sunrise, sunset, moonlight, and noonday—in calm, perhaps in storm—fills and satisfies my mind. I shall be discontented at nothing. And then I am not to be with a set of people with whom I have nothing in common—who would be nuisances and bores; but with you, whom I like and know, and who knows me.

'I have an odd circumstance to relate to you: prepare for a hearty laugh! The other day Mr. ——,[1] a vicar, came

[1] 'Mr. ——' was Mr. Hodgson, who had been Mr. Brontë's first curate in 1837–8, and was at this time incumbent of Christchurch, Colne, Lancashire, a position he held until his death in 1874. Mr. Hodgson's first curate at Colne was Mr. David Bryce—the 'Mr. B——' of this

to spend the day with us, bringing with him his own curate. The latter gentleman, by name Mr. B., is a young Irish clergyman, fresh from Dublin University. It was the first time we had any of us seen him, but, however, after the manner of his countrymen, he soon made himself at home. His character quickly appeared in his conversation; witty, lively, ardent, clever too; but deficient in the dignity and discretion of an Englishman. At home, you know, I talk with ease, and am never shy—never weighed down and oppressed by that miserable *mauvaise honte* which torments and constrains me elsewhere. So I conversed with the Irishman, and laughed at his jests; and, though I saw faults in his character, excused them because of the amusement his originality afforded. I cooled a little, indeed, and drew in towards the latter part of the evening, because he began to season his conversation with something of Hibernian flattery, which I did not quite relish. However they went away, and no more was thought about them. A few days after I got a letter, the direction of which puzzled me, it being in a hand I was not accustomed to see. Evidently it was neither from you nor Mary, my only correspondents. Having opened and read it, it proved to be a declaration of attachment and proposal of matrimony, expressed in the ardent language of the sapient young Irishman! I hope you are laughing heartily. This is not like one of my adventures, is it? It more nearly resembles Martha's. I am certainly doomed to be an old maid. Never mind. I made up my mind to that fate ever since I was twelve years old.

'Well! thought I, I have heard of love at first sight, but this beats all! I leave you to guess what my answer would be, convinced that you will not do me the injustice of guessing wrong.'

letter—who died at Colne, January 17, 1840, aged 29. Mr. Hodgson was in the habit of telling his family that it was his impression that matters between Mr. Bryce and Miss Brontë had gone beyond the casual stage here described, but this is scarcely probable by the light of Charlotte Brontë's explicit statement.

On August 14 she still writes from Haworth :—

'I have in vain packed my box, and prepared everything for our anticipated journey. It so happens that I can get no conveyance this week or the next. The only gig let out on hire in Haworth is at Harrogate, and likely to remain there for aught I can hear. Papa decidedly objects to my going by the coach, and walking to B(irstall), though I am sure I could manage it. Aunt exclaims against the weather, and the roads, and the four winds of heaven ; so I am in a fix, and, what is worse, so are *you*. On reading over, for the second or third time, your last letter (which, by-the-bye, was written in such hieroglyphics that, at the first hasty perusal, I could hardly make out two consecutive words), I find you intimate that if I leave this journey till Thursday I shall be too late. I grieve that I should have so inconvenienced you ; but I need not talk of either Friday or Saturday now, for I rather imagine there is small chance of my ever going at all. The elders of the house have never cordially acquiesced in the measure ; and now that impediments seem to start up at every step opposition grows more open. Papa, indeed, would willingly indulge me, but this very kindness of his makes me doubt whether I ought to draw upon it ; so, though I could battle out aunt's discontent, I yield to papa's indulgence.[1] He does not say so, but I know he would rather I stayed at home ; and aunt meant well too, I dare say, but I am provoked that she reserved the expression of her decided disapproval till all was settled between you and myself. Reckon on me no more ; leave me out in your calculations : perhaps I ought, in the beginning, to have had prudence sufficient to shut my eyes against such a prospect of pleasure, so as to deny myself the hope of it. Be as angry as you please with me for disappointing you. I did not intend it, and have only one thing

[1] It is perhaps pertinent to hazard the suggestion that this testimony by Charlotte Brontë to her father's kindness is worth a great deal more than the unverifiable gossip concerning Mr. Brontë's inconsiderate selfishness that has passed current for many years.

more to say—if you do not go immediately to the sea, will you come to see us at Haworth? This invitation is not mine only, but papa's and aunt's.'

However, a little more patience, a little more delay, and she enjoyed the pleasure she had wished for so much. She and her friend went to Easton for a fortnight in the latter part of September. It was here she received her first impressions of the sea.

'October 24.[1]

'Have you forgotten the sea by this time, Ellen? Is it grown dim in your mind? Or can you still see it, dark, blue, and green, and foam-white, and hear it roaring roughly when the wind is high, or rushing softly when it is calm? . . . I am as well as need be, and very fat. I think of Easton very often, and of worthy Mr. H.,[2] and his kind-hearted helpmate, and of our pleasant walks to Harlequin Wood, and to Boynton, our merry evenings, our romps with little Hancheon, &c. &c. If we both live, this period of our lives will long be a theme for pleasant recollection. Did you chance, in your letter to Mr. H., to mention my spectacles? I am sadly inconvenienced by the want of them.

[1] This letter, dated Haworth, October 24, 1839, commences—

'You will have concluded by this time that I never got home at all, but evaporated by the way; however, I did get home, and very well too, by the aid of the Dewsbury coachman, though if I had not contrived to make friends with him I don't know how I should have managed. He showed me the way to the inn where the Keighley coach stopped, carried my box, took my place, and saw my luggage put in, and helped me to mount on to the top. I assure you I feel exceedingly obliged to him. I had a long letter from your brother Henry giving an account of his bride elect.'

[2] Mr. Hudson, of Easton, near Bridlington or Burlington, Yorkshire, is here referred to, and we are brought into relation with a little-known friendship of Charlotte Brontë's. Mr. John Hudson was a farmer and a friend of the Nussey family. Charlotte Brontë and Ellen Nussey lodged with him on their excursion to the sea. 'Little Hancheon's' real name was Fanny Whipp, then about seven years of age. She married a Mr. North, and died in 1866, aged thirty-five.

I can neither read, write, nor draw with comfort in their absence. I hope Madame won't refuse to give them up. . . . Excuse the brevity of this letter, for I have been drawing all day, and my eyes are so tired it is quite a labour to write.'

But, as the vivid remembrance of this pleasure died away, an accident occurred to make the actual duties of life press somewhat heavily for a time.

'December 21, 1839.

'We are at present, and have been during the last month, rather busy, as, for that space of time, we have been without a servant, except a little girl to run errands. Poor Tabby became so lame that she was at length obliged to leave us. She is residing with her sister, in a little house of her own, which she bought with her savings a year or two since. She is very comfortable, and wants nothing; as she is near we see her very often. In the meantime Emily and I are sufficiently busy, as you may suppose: I manage the ironing, and keep the rooms clean; Emily does the baking, and attends to the kitchen. We are such odd animals that we prefer this mode of contrivance to having a new face amongst us. Besides, we do not despair of Tabby's return, and she shall not be supplanted by a stranger in her absence. I excited aunt's wrath very much by burning the clothes, the first time I attempted to iron; but I do better now. Human feelings are queer things; I am much happier black-leading the stoves, making the beds, and sweeping the floors at home than I should be living like a fine lady anywhere else. I must indeed drop my subscription to the Jews, because I have no money to keep it up. I ought to have announced this intention to you before, but I quite forgot I was a subscriber. I intend to force myself to take another situation when I can get one, though I *hate* and *abhor* the very thoughts of governess-ship. But I must do it; and therefore I heartily wish I could hear of a family where they need such a commodity as a governess.'

CHAPTER IX

The year 1840 found all the Brontës living at home, except Anne. As I have already intimated, for some reason with which I am unacquainted, the plan of sending Branwell to study at the Royal Academy had been relinquished; probably it was found, on inquiry, that the expenses of such a life were greater than his father's slender finances could afford, even with the help which Charlotte's labours at Miss Wooler's gave, by providing for Anne's board and education. I gather from what I have heard that Branwell must have been severely disappointed when the plan fell through. His talents were certainly very brilliant, and of this he was fully conscious, and fervently desired, by their use, either in writing or drawing, to make himself a name. At the same time he would probably have found his strong love of pleasure and irregular habits a great impediment in his path to fame; but these blemishes in his character were only additional reasons why he yearned after a London life, in which he imagined he could obtain every stimulant to his already vigorous intellect, while at the same time he would have a license of action to be found only in crowded cities. Thus his whole nature was attracted towards the metropolis; and many an hour must he have spent poring over the map of London, to judge from an anecdote which has been told me. Some traveller for a London house of business came to Haworth for a night, and, according to the unfortunate habit of the place, the brilliant 'Patrick' was sent for to the inn, to beguile the evening by his intellectual conversation and his flashes of wit. They began to talk of London; of the habits and ways of life there; of the places of amusement;

and Branwell informed the Londoner of one or two short cuts from point to point, up narrow lanes or back streets; and it was only towards the end of the evening that the traveller discovered, from his companion's voluntary confession, that he had never set foot in London at all.

At this time the young man seemed to have his fate in his own hands. He was full of noble impulses, as well as of extraordinary gifts; not accustomed to resist temptation, it is true, from any higher motive than strong family affection, but showing so much power of attachment to all about him that they took pleasure in believing that, after a time, he would 'right himself,' and that they should have pride and delight in the use he would then make of his splendid talents. His aunt especially made him her great favourite. There are always peculiar trials in the life of an only boy in a family of girls. He is expected to act a part in life; to *do*, while they are only to *be*; and the necessity of their giving way to him in some things is too often exaggerated into their giving way to him in all, and thus rendering him utterly selfish. In the family about whom I am writing, while the rest were almost ascetic in their habits, Branwell was allowed to grow up self-indulgent; but, in early youth, his power of attracting and attaching people was so great that few came in contact with him who were not so much dazzled by him as to be desirous of gratifying whatever wishes he expressed. Of course he was careful enough not to reveal anything before his father and sisters of the pleasures he indulged in; but his tone of thought and conversation became gradually coarser, and, for a time, his sisters tried to persuade themselves that such coarseness was a part of manliness, and to blind themselves by love to the fact that Branwell was worse than other young men. At present, though he had, they were aware, fallen into some errors, the exact nature of which they avoided knowing, still he was their hope and their darling; their pride, who should some time bring great glory to the name of Brontë.

He and his sister Charlotte were both slight and small of

stature, while the other two were of taller and larger make. I have seen Branwell's profile; it is what would be generally esteemed very handsome; the forehead is massive, the eye well set, and the expression of it fine and intellectual; the nose too is good; but there are coarse lines about the mouth, and the lips, though of handsome shape, are loose and thick, indicating self-indulgence, while the slightly retreating chin conveys an idea of weakness of will. His hair and complexion were sandy. He had enough of Irish blood in him to make his manners frank and genial, with a kind of natural gallantry about them. In a fragment of one of his manuscripts which I have read there is a justness and felicity of expression which is very striking. It is the beginning of a tale, and the actors in it are drawn with much of the grace of characteristic portrait-painting, in perfectly pure and simple language which distinguishes so many of Addison's papers in the 'Spectator.' The fragment is too short to afford the means of judging whether he had much dramatic talent, as the persons of the story are not thrown into conversation. But altogether the elegance and composure of style are such as one would not have expected from this vehement and ill-fated young man. He had a stronger desire for literary fame burning in his heart than even that which occasionally flashed up in his sisters'. He tried various outlets for his talents. He wrote and sent poems to Wordsworth and Coleridge, who both expressed kind and laudatory opinions, and he frequently contributed verses to the 'Leeds Mercury.' In 1840 he was living at home, employing himself in occasional composition of various kinds, and waiting till some occupation, for which he might be fitted without any expensive course of preliminary training, should turn up; waiting, not impatiently; for he saw society of one kind (probably what he called 'life') at the 'Black Bull;' and at home he was as yet the cherished favourite.

Miss Branwell was unaware of the fermentation of unoccupied talent going on around her. She was not her nieces' confidante—perhaps no one so much older could have been—

but their father, from whom they derived not a little of their adventurous spirit, was silently cognisant of much of which she took no note. Next to her nephew the docile, pensive Anne was her favourite. Of her she had taken charge from her infancy; she was always patient and tractable, and would submit quietly to occasional oppression, even when she felt it keenly. Not so her two elder sisters; they made their opinions known, when roused by any injustice. At such times Emily would express herself as strongly as Charlotte, although perhaps less frequently. But, in general, notwithstanding that Miss Branwell might be occasionally unreasonable, she and her nieces went on smoothly enough; and though they might now and then be annoyed by petty tyranny, she still inspired them with sincere respect, and not a little affection. They were, moreover, grateful to her for many habits she had enforced upon them, and which in time had become a second nature: order, method, neatness in everything; a perfect knowledge of all kinds of household work; an exact punctuality, and obedience to the laws of time and place, of which no one but themselves, I have heard Charlotte say, could tell the value in after life. With their impulsive natures it was positive repose to have learnt implicit obedience to external laws. People in Haworth have assured me that, according to the hour of day—nay, the very minute—could they have told what the inhabitants of the parsonage were about. At certain times the girls would be sewing in their aunt's bedroom—the chamber which, in former days, before they had outstripped her in their learning, had served them as a schoolroom; at certain (early) hours they had their meals; from six to eight Miss Branwell read aloud to Mr. Brontë; at punctual eight the household assembled to evening prayers in his study; and by nine he, the aunt, and Tabby were all in bed—the girls free to pace up and down (like restless wild animals) in the parlour, talking over plans and projects, and thoughts of what was to be their future life.

At the time of which I write the favourite idea was that

of keeping a school. They thought that, by a little contrivance, and a very little additional building, a small number of pupils, four or six, might be accommodated in the parsonage. As teaching seemed the only profession open to them, and as it appeared that Emily at least could not live away from home, while the others also suffered much from the same cause, this plan of school-keeping presented itself as most desirable. But it involved some outlay; and to this their aunt was averse. Yet there was no one to whom they could apply for a loan of the requisite means except Miss Branwell, who had made a small store out of her savings, which she intended for her nephew and nieces eventually, but which she did not like to risk. Still this plan of school-keeping remained uppermost; and in the evenings of this winter of 1839-40 the alterations that would be necessary in the house, and the best way of convincing their aunt of the wisdom of their project, formed the principal subject of their conversation.

This anxiety weighed upon their minds rather heavily during the months of dark and dreary weather. Nor were external events, among the circle of their friends, of a cheerful character. In January 1840 Charlotte heard of the death of a young girl who had been a pupil of hers, and a schoolfellow of Anne's, at the time when the sisters were together at Roe Head; and had attached herself very strongly to the latter, who, in return, bestowed upon her much quiet affection. It was a sad day when the intelligence of this young creature's death arrived. Charlotte wrote thus on January 12, 1840:—

'Your letter, which I received this morning, was one of painful interest. Anne C.,[1] it seems, is *dead*; when I saw her last she was a young, beautiful, and happy girl; and now "life's fitful fever" is over with her, and she "sleeps well." I shall never see her again. It is a sorrowful thought; for she was a warm-hearted, affectionate being, and I cared for her. Wherever I seek for her now in this world she cannot be found, no more than a flower or a leaf which

[1] Anne Carter, who had also a brief experience as a governess.

withered twenty years ago. A bereavement of this kind gives one a glimpse of the feeling those must have who have seen all drop round them, friend after friend, and are left to end their pilgrimage alone. But tears are fruitless, and I try not to repine.' [1]

During this winter Charlotte employed her leisure hours in writing a story. Some fragments of the manuscript yet

[1] On January 24, 1840, she wrote to Miss Nussey—

'My dear Ellen,—I have given Mrs. E. H. her *coup de grâce*—that is to say, I have relinquished the idea of becoming an inmate of her family. I have no doubt she will be very cross with me, especially as when I first declined going she pressed me to take a trial of a month. I am now, therefore, again adrift without an object. I am sorry for this, but something may turn up ere long. I know not whether to encourage you in your plan of going out or not. Your health seems to me the greatest obstacle; if you could obtain a situation like M. B., you might do very well. But you could never live in an unruly, violent family of modern children, such, for instance, as those at Blake Hall. Anne is not to return. Mrs. Ingham is a placid, mild woman; but as for the children, it was one struggle of life-wearing exertion to keep them in anything like decent order. I am miserable when I allow myself to dwell on the necessity of spending my life as a governess. The chief requisite for that station seems to me to be the power of taking things easily as they come, and of making oneself comfortable and at home wherever we may chance to be—qualities in which all our family are singularly deficient. I know I cannot live with a person like Mrs. Sidgwick, but I hope all women are not like her, and my motto is "Try again." Mary Taylor, I am sorry to hear, is ill. Have you seen her or heard anything of her lately? Sickness seems very general, and death too, at least in this neighbourhood. Mr. Bryce is dead. He had fallen into a state of delicate health for some time, and the rupture of a blood-vessel carried him off. He was a strong, athletic-looking man when I saw him, and that is scarcely six months ago. Though I knew so little of him, and of course could not be deeply or permanently interested in what concerned him, I confess, when I suddenly heard he was dead, I felt both shocked and saddened: it was no shame to feel so, was it? I scold you, Ellen, for writing illegibly and badly, but I think you may repay the compliment with cent. per cent. interest. I am not in the humour for writing a long letter, so good-bye. God bless you.

'C. B.'

remain, but it is in too small a hand to be read without great fatigue to the eyes; and one cares the less to read it as she herself condemned it, in the preface to 'The Professor,' by saying that in this story she had got over such taste as she might once have had for the 'ornamental and redundant in composition.'[1] The beginning, too, as she acknowledges, was on a scale commensurate with one of Richardson's novels, of seven or eight volumes. I gather some of these particulars from a copy of a letter apparently in reply to one from Wordsworth, to whom she had sent the commencement of the story, some time in the summer of 1840.

'Authors are generally very tenacious of their productions, but I am not so much attached to this but that I can give it up without much distress. No doubt, if I had gone on, I should have made quite a Richardsonian concern of it. . . . I had materials in my head for half a dozen volumes. . . . Of course it is with considerable regret I relinquish any scheme so charming as the one I have sketched. It is very edifying and profitable to create a world out of your own brains, and people it with inhabitants, who are so many Melchisedecs, and have no father nor mother but your own imagination. . . . I am sorry I did not exist fifty or sixty years ago, when the "Ladies' Magazine" was flourishing like a green bay tree. In that case, I make no doubt, my aspirations after literary fame would have met with due encouragement, and I should have had the pleasure of introducing Messrs. Percy and West into the very best society, and recording all their sayings and doings in double-columned, close-printed pages. . . . I recollect, when I was a child, getting hold of some antiquated volumes, and reading them by stealth with the most exquisite pleasure. You give a

[1] This manuscript is not now traceable. The only fragments known of later date than the childish booklets which end in 1837 do not answer to the description. One of these, 'Emma,' was published in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1860, with a brief introduction by Thackeray, and has since always been reprinted in the volume containing *The Professor*.

correct description of the patient Grisels of those days. My aunt was one of them; and to this day she thinks the tales of the "Ladies' Magazine" infinitely superior to any trash of modern literature. So do I; for I read them in childhood, and childhood has a very strong faculty of admiration, but a very weak one of criticism. . . . I am pleased that you cannot quite decide whether I am an attorney's clerk or a novel-reading dressmaker. I will not help you at all in the discovery; and as to my handwriting, or the ladylike touches in my style and imagery, you must not draw any conclusion from that—I may employ an amanuensis. Seriously, sir, I am very much obliged to you for your kind and candid letter. I almost wonder you took the trouble to read and notice the novelette of an anonymous scribe, who had not even the manners to tell you whether he was a man or a woman, or whether his "C. T." meant Charles Timms or Charlotte Tomkins.'

There are two or three things noticeable in the letter from which these extracts are taken. The first is the initials with which she had evidently signed the former one to which she alludes. About this time, to her more familiar correspondents, she occasionally calls herself 'Charles Thunder,' making a kind of pseudonym for herself out of her Christian name and the meaning of her Greek surname. In the next place, there is a touch of assumed smartness, very different from the simple, womanly, dignified letter which she had written to Southey, under nearly similar circumstances, three years before. I imagine the cause of this difference to be twofold. Southey, in his reply to her first letter, had appealed to the higher parts of her nature, in calling her to consider whether literature was, or was not, the best course for a woman to pursue. But the person to whom she addressed this one had evidently confined himself to purely literary criticisms, besides which her sense of humour was tickled by the perplexity which her correspondent felt as to whether he was addressing a man or a woman. She rather

wished to encourage the former idea; and, in consequence, possibly, assumed something of the flippancy which very probably existed in her brother's style of conversation, from whom she would derive her notions of young manhood, not likely, as far as refinement was concerned, to be improved by the other specimens she had seen, such as the curates whom she afterwards represented in 'Shirley.'

These curates were full of strong High-Church feeling. Belligerent by nature, it was well for their professional character that they had, as clergymen, sufficient scope for the exercise of these warlike propensities. Mr. Brontë, with all his warm regard for Church and State, had a great respect for mental freedom; and, though he was the last man in the world to conceal his opinions, he lived in perfect amity with all the respectable part of those who differed from him. Not so the curates. Dissent was schism, and schism was condemned in the Bible. In default of turbaned Saracens they entered on a crusade against Methodists in broadcloth; and the consequence was that the Methodists and Baptists refused to pay the church rates. Miss Brontë thus describes the state of things at this time:—

'Little Haworth has been all in a bustle about church rates since you were here. We had a stirring meeting in the schoolroom. Papa took the chair, and Mr. C(ollins) and Mr. W(eightman) acted as his supporters, one on each side. There was violent opposition, which set Mr. C(ollins)'s Irish blood in a ferment, and if papa had not kept him quiet, partly by persuasion and partly by compulsion, he would have given the Dissenters their kale through the reek—a Scotch proverb, which I will explain to you another time. He and Mr. W(eightman) both bottled up their wrath for that time, but it was only to explode with redoubled force at a future period. We had two sermons on dissent, and its consequences, preached last Sunday—one in the afternoon by Mr. W(eightman), and one in the evening by Mr. C(ollins). All the Dissenters were invited to come and hear, and they

actually shut up their chapels and came in a body; of course the church was crowded. Mr. W.[1] delivered a noble, eloquent, High-Church, Apostolical-Succession discourse, in which he banged the Dissenters most fearlessly and unflinchingly. I thought they had got enough for one while, but it was nothing to the dose that was thrust down their throats in the evening. A keener, cleverer, bolder, and more heart-stirring harangue than that which Mr. C(ollins) delivered from Haworth pulpit, last Sunday evening, I never heard. He did not rant; he did not cant; he did not whine; he did not sniggle; he just got up and spoke with the boldness of a man who was impressed with the truth of what he was saying, who has no fear of his enemies and no dread of consequences. His sermon lasted an hour, yet I was sorry when it was done. I do not say that I agree either with him or with Mr. W(eightman), either in all or in half their opinions. I consider them bigoted, intolerant, and wholly unjustifiable on the ground of common sense. My conscience will not let me be either a Puseyite or a Hookist; *mais*, if I were a Dissenter, I would have taken the first opportunity of kicking or of horsewhipping both the gentlemen for their stern, bitter attack on my religion and its teachers. But, in spite of all this, I admired the noble integrity which could dictate so fearless an opposition against so strong an antagonist.[2]

'P.S.—Mr. W. has given another lecture at the Keighley Mechanics' Institution, and papa has also given a lecture: both are spoken of very highly in the newspapers, and it is mentioned as a matter of wonder that such displays of intel-

[1] In the original letter 'Mr. W.' of this sentence is here called 'Miss Celia Amelia,' the nickname that the Brontë girls gave to Mr. Weightman.

[2] The letter continues—

'I have been painting a portrait of Agnes Walton for our friend Miss Celia Amelia. You would laugh to see how his eyes sparkle with delight when he looks at it, like a pretty child pleased with a new plaything. Good-bye to you; let me have no more of your humbug about Cupid, &c. You know as well as I do it is all groundless trash.'

lect should emanate from the village of Haworth, "situated among the bogs and mountains, and, until very lately, supposed to be in a state of semi-barbarism." Such are the words of the newspaper.'

To fill up the account of this outwardly eventless year I may add a few more extracts from the letters entrusted to me.

'May 15, 1840.

'Do not be over-persuaded to marry a man you can never respect—I do not say *love*, because, I think, if you can respect a person before marriage, moderate love at least will come after; and as to intense *passion*, I am convinced that that is no desirable feeling. In the first place, it seldom or never meets with a requital; and, in the second place, if it did, the feeling would be only temporary: it would last the honeymoon, and then, perhaps, give place to disgust, or indifference, worse perhaps than disgust. Certainly this would be the case on the man's part; and on the woman's—God help her, if she is left to love passionately and alone.

'I am tolerably well convinced that I shall never marry at all. Reason tells me so, and I am not so utterly the slave of feeling but that I can *occasionally hear* her voice.'

'June 2, 1840.

'Mary is not yet come to Haworth; but she is to come on the condition that I first go and stay a few days there. If all be well I shall go next Wednesday. I may stay at Gomersal until Friday or Saturday, and the early part of the following week I shall pass with you, if you will have me—which last sentence indeed is nonsense, for as I shall be glad to see you, so I know you will be glad to see me. This arrangement will not allow much time, but it is the only practicable one which, considering all the circumstances, I can effect. Do not urge me to stay more than two or three days, because I shall be obliged to refuse you. I intend to walk to Keighley, there to take the coach as far as B(irstall),

then to get some one to carry my box, and to walk the rest of the way to G(omersal). If I manage this I think I shall contrive very well. I shall reach B(irstall) by about five o'clock, and then I shall have the cool of the evening for the walk. I have communicated the whole arrangement to Mary. I desire exceedingly to see both her and you. Good-bye.

'C. B.
'C. B.
'C. B.
'C. B.

'If you have any better plan to suggest I am open to conviction, provided your plan is practicable.'

'August 20, 1840.

'Have you seen anything of Miss H. lately?[1] I wish they, or somebody else, would get me a situation. I have

[1] In the original letter 'Miss H.' reads as 'the Miss Woolers.' This letter opened as follows; Mrs. Gaskell printed only its concluding sentences :—

'Dear Mrs. Ellen,—I was very well pleased with your capital long letter. A better farce than the whole affair of that letter-opening (ducks and Mr. Weightman included) was never imagined.* By-the-bye, speaking of Mr. W., I told you he was gone to pass his examination at Ripon six weeks ago. He is not come back yet, and what has become of him we don't know. Branwell has received one letter since he went, speaking rapturously of Agnes Walton, describing certain balls at which he had figured, and announcing that he had been twice over head and ears desperately in love. It is my devout belief that his reverence left Haworth with the fixed intention of never returning. If he does return, it will be because he has not been able to get a "living." Haworth is not the place for him. He requires novelty, a change of faces, difficulties to be overcome. He pleases so easily that he soon gets weary of pleasing at all. He ought not to have been a parson; certainly he ought not. I told Branwell all you said in your last. He said little, but laughed. I am glad you have not broken your heart because John Branwell is married. Our *august* relations, as you choose to call them, are gone back to London. They never stayed with us, they only spent one day at

* Referring to a present of birds which the curate had sent to Miss Nussey.

answered advertisements without number, but my applications have met with no success.

'I have got another bale of French books from Gomersal, containing upwards of forty volumes. I have read about half. They are like the rest, clever, sophistical, and immoral. The best of it is, they give one a thorough idea of France and Paris, and are the best substitute for French conversation that I have met with.

'I positively have nothing more to say to you, for I am in a stupid humour. You must excuse this letter not being quite as long as your own. I have written to you soon, that you might not look after the postman in vain. Preserve this writing as a curiosity in caligraphy—I think it is exquisite—all brilliant black blots and utterly illegible letters.

'CALIBAN.'

'"The wind bloweth where it listeth. Thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth." That, I believe, is Scripture, though in what chapter or book, or whether it be correctly quoted, I can't possibly say. However it behoves me to write a letter to a young woman of the name of Ellen, with whom I was once acquainted, "in life's morning march, when my spirit was young." This young woman wished me to write to her some time since, though I have nothing to say—I e'en put it off, day by day, till at last, fearing that she will "curse me by her gods," I feel constrained to sit down and tack a few lines together, which she may call a letter or not as she pleases. Now if the young woman expects sense in this production she will find herself miserably disappointed. I shall dress her a dish of salmagundi—I shall cook a hash—compound a stew—toss up an *omelette soufflée à la française*, and send it

our house. Have you seen anything of the Miss Woolers lately? I wish they, or somebody else, would get me a situation. I have answered advertisements without number, but my applications have met with no success.'

The reference to John Branwell and '*august* relations' is to a brief visit of some of the Penzance cousins at this time.

her with my respects. The wind, which is very high up in our hills of Judea, though, I suppose, down in the Philistine flats of Birstall parish it is nothing to speak of, has produced the same effects on the contents of my knowledge box that a quaigh of usquebaugh does upon those of most other bipeds. I see everything *couleur de rose*, and am strongly inclined to dance a jig, if I knew how. I think I must partake of the nature of a pig or an ass—both which animals are strongly affected by a high wind. From what quarter the wind blows I cannot tell, for I never could in my life; but I should very much like to know how the great brewing-tub of Bridlington Bay works, and what sort of yeasty froth rises just now on the waves.

'A woman of the name of Mrs. B.,[1] it seems, wants a teacher. I wish she would have me; and I have written to Miss Wooler to tell her so. Verily, it is a delightful thing to live here at home, at full liberty to do just what one pleases. But I recollect some scrubby old fable about grasshoppers and ants, by a scrubby old knave yclept Æsop; the grasshoppers sang all the summer and starved all the winter.

'A distant relation of mine, one Patrick Branwell,[2] has set off to seek his fortune in the wild, wandering, adventurous, romantic, knight-errant-like capacity of clerk on the Leeds and Manchester Railroad.[3] Leeds and Manchester—where

[1] Mrs. Thomas Brooke. Those who knew her declared that Mrs. Brooke would have proved the kindest of friends to the sensitive governess. She was the mother of Mr. William Brooke, of Northgate House, Huddersfield. 'At Northgate House,' writes the Rev. T. W. Bardsley, Vicar of Huddersfield, in a paper read before the Brontë Society, 'Charlotte Brontë would have found a congenial home.'

[2] 'One Patrick Boanerges' in original letter.

[3] Branwell had been tutor in the family of a Mr. Postlethwaite, of Broughton-in-Furness, from January to June 1840. He obtained his situation as clerk-in-charge at Sowerby Bridge on October 1, 1840, just before the opening of the line from Hebden Bridge to Normanton. He was here some months, being transferred in 1841 to Luddenden Foot, a place about a mile further up the valley. He was there for twelve months. (Leyland's *Brontë Family*.)

are they? Cities in the wilderness, like Tadmor, *alias* Palmyra—are they not?

'There is one little trait respecting Mr. W(eightman),[1] which lately came to my knowledge, which gives a glimpse of the better side of his character. Last Saturday night he had been sitting an hour in the parlour with papa; and, as he went away, I heard papa say to him, "What is the matter with you? You seem in very low spirits to-night." "Oh, I don't know. I've been to see a poor young girl, who, I'm afraid, is dying." "Indeed! what is her name?" "Susan B(land), the daughter of John B(land), the superintendent." Now Susan B(land) is my oldest and best scholar in the Sunday school; and, when I heard that, I thought I would go as soon as I could to see her. I did go on Monday afternoon, and found her on her way to that "bourn whence no traveller returns." After sitting with her some time, I happened to ask her mother if she thought a little port wine would do her good. She replied that the doctor had recom-

[1] The following passages are omitted by Mrs. Gaskell:—

'I know Mrs. Ellen is burning with eagerness to hear something about William Weightman. I think I'll plague her by not telling her a word. To speak heaven's truth, I have precious little to say, inasmuch as I seldom see him, except on a Sunday, when he looks as handsome, cheery, and good-tempered as usual. I have indeed had the advantage of one long conversation since his return from Westmoreland, when he poured out his whole warm, fickle soul in fondness and admiration of Agnes Walton. Whether he is in love with her or not I can't say; I can only observe that it sounds very like it. He sent us a prodigious quantity of game while he was away—a brace of wild ducks, a brace of black grouse, a brace of partridges, ditto of snipes, ditto of curlews, and a large salmon. If you were to ask Mr. Weightman's opinion of my character just now, he would say that at first he thought me a cheerful, chatty kind of body, but that on further acquaintance he found me of a capricious, changeful temper, never to be reckoned on. He does not know that I have regulated my manner by his—that I was cheerful and chatty so long as he was respectful, and that when he grew almost contemptuously familiar I found it necessary to adopt a degree of reserve which was not natural and therefore painful to me. I find this reserve very convenient, and consequently I intend to keep it up.'

mended it, and that when Mr. W(eightman) was last there he had brought them a bottle of wine and a jar of preserves. She added, that he was always goodnatured to poor folks, and seemed to have a deal of feeling and kind-heartedness about him. No doubt there are defects in his character, but there are also good qualities. . . . God bless him! I wonder who, with his advantages, would be without his faults. I know many of his faulty actions, many of his weak points; yet, where I am, he shall always find rather a defender than an accuser. To be sure my opinion will go but a very little way to decide his character; what of that? People should do right as far as their ability extends. You are not to suppose, from all this, that Mr. W(eightman) and I are on very amiable terms; we are not at all. We are distant, cold, and reserved. We seldom speak; and when we do, it is only to exchange the most trivial and commonplace remarks.'

The Mrs. B(rooke) alluded to in this letter, as in want of a governess, entered into a correspondence with Miss Brontë, and expressed herself much pleased with the letters she received from her, with the 'style and candour of the application,' in which Charlotte had taken care to tell her, that if she wanted a showy, elegant, or fashionable person her correspondent was not fitted for such a situation. But Mrs. B(rooke) required her governess to give instructions in music and singing, for which Charlotte was not qualified; and, accordingly, the negotiation fell through. But Miss Brontë was not one to sit down in despair after disappointment. Much as she disliked the life of a private governess, it was her duty to relieve her father of the burden of her support, and this was the only way open to her. So she set to advertising and inquiring with fresh vigour.

In the meantime a little occurrence took place, described in one of her letters, which I shall give, as it shows her instinctive aversion to a particular class of men, whose vices some have supposed she looked upon with indulgence. The

extract tells all that need be known, for the purpose I have in view, of the miserable pair to whom it relates.[1]

'You remember Mr. and Mrs. ——? Mrs. —— came here the other day, with a most melancholy tale of her wretched husband's drunken, extravagant, profligate habits. She asked papa's advice; there was nothing, she said, but ruin before them. They owed debts which they could never pay. She expected Mr. ——'s instant dismissal from his curacy; she knew, from bitter experience, that his vices were utterly hopeless. He treated her and her child savagely; with much more to the same effect. Papa advised her to leave him for ever, and go home, if she

[1] This letter opens as follows:—

'November 12, 1840.

'My dear Nell,—You will excuse this scrawled sheet of paper, inasmuch as I happen to be out of that article, this being the only available sheet I can find in my desk. I have effaced one of the delectable portraitures, but have spared the others—lead-pencil sketches of horse's head, and man's head—being moved to that act of clemency by the recollection that they are not the work of my hand, but of the sacred fingers of his reverence William Weightman. You will discern that the eye is a little too elevated in the horse's head, otherwise I can assure you it is no such bad attempt. It shows taste and something of an artist's eye. The fellow had no copy for it. He sketched it, and one or two other little things, when he happened to be here one evening, but you should have seen the vanity with which he afterwards regarded his productions. One of them represented the flying figure of Fame inscribing his own name on the clouds.

'Mrs. Brooke and I have interchanged letters. She expressed herself pleased with the style of my application—with its candour, &c. (I took care to tell her that if she wanted a showy, elegant, fashionable personage, I was not the man for her), but she wants music and singing. I can't give her music and singing, so of course the negotiation is null and void. Being once up, however, I don't mean to sit down till I have got what I want; but there is no sense in talking about unfinished projects, so we'll drop the subject. Consider this last sentence a hint from me to be applied practically. It seems Miss Eliza Wooler's school is in a consumptive state of health. I have been endeavouring to obtain a reinforcement of pupils for her, but I cannot succeed, because Mrs. Heap is opening a new school in Bradford.'

had a home to go to. She said this was what she had long resolved to do; and she would leave him directly, as soon as Mr. B. dismissed him. She expressed great disgust and contempt towards him, and did not affect to have the shadow of regard in any way. I do not wonder at this, but I *do* wonder she should ever marry a man towards whom her feelings must always have been pretty much the same as they are now. I am morally certain no decent woman could experience anything but aversion towards such a man as Mr. ——. Before I knew or suspected his character, and when I rather wondered at his versatile talents, I felt it in an uncontrollable degree. I hated to talk with him—hated to look at him; though, as I was not certain that there was substantial reason for such a dislike, and thought it absurd to trust to mere instinct, I both concealed and repressed the feeling as much as I could; and, on all occasions, treated him with as much civility as I was mistress of. I was struck with Mary's expression of a similar feeling at first sight; she said, when we left him, "That is a hideous man, Charlotte!" I thought, "He is indeed."'

CHAPTER X

Early in March 1841 Miss Brontë obtained her second and last situation as a governess.[1] This time she esteemed herself fortunate in becoming a member of a kind-hearted and friendly household. The master of it she especially regarded as a valuable friend, whose advice helped to guide her in one very important step of her life. But as her definite acquirements were few, she had to eke them out by employing her leisure time in needlework; and altogether her position was that of 'bonne,' or nursery governess, liable to repeated and never-ending calls upon her time. This description of uncertain yet perpetual employment, subject to the exercise of another person's will at all hours of the day, was peculiarly trying to one whose life at home had been full of abundant leisure. *Idle* she never was in any place, but of the multitude of small talks, plans, duties, pleasures, &c., that make up most people's days her home life was nearly destitute. This made it possible for her to

[1] With Mr. and Mrs. White at Upperwood House, Rawdon, Yorks, whence many of Miss Brontë's letters were written. In one of them she writes—

'This place looks exquisitely beautiful just now. The grounds are certainly lovely, and all is as green as an emerald. I wish you would just come and look at it. Mrs. White would be as proud as Punch to show it you. Mr. White has been writing an urgent invitation to papa, entreating him to come and spend a week here. I don't at all wish papa to come; it would be like incurring an obligation. Somehow I have managed to get a good deal more control over the children lately; this makes my life a good deal easier. Also, by dint of nursing the fat baby, it has got to know me and be fond of me. I suspect myself of growing rather fond of it. Exertion of any kind is always beneficial.'

go through long and deep histories of feeling and imagination, for which others, odd as it sounds, have rarely time. This made it inevitable that—later on, in her too short career—the intensity of her feeling should wear out her physical health. The habit of 'making out,' which had grown with her growth, and strengthened with her strength, had become a part of her nature. Yet all exercise of her strongest and most characteristic faculties was now out of the question. She could not (as while she was at Miss Wooler's) feel, amidst the occupations of the day, that when evening came she might employ herself in more congenial ways. No doubt all who enter upon the career of a governess have to relinquish much; no doubt it must ever be a life of sacrifice; but to Charlotte Brontë it was a perpetual attempt to force all her faculties into a direction for which the whole of her previous life had unfitted them. Moreover the little Brontës had been brought up motherless; and from knowing nothing of the gaiety and the sportiveness of childhood—from never having experienced caresses or fond attentions themselves—they were ignorant of the very nature of infancy, or how to call out its engaging qualities. Children were to them the troublesome necessities of humanity; they had never been drawn into contact with them in any other way. Years afterwards, when Miss Brontë came to stay with us, she watched our little girls perpetually; and I could not persuade her that they were only average specimens of well-brought-up children. She was surprised and touched by any sign of thoughtfulness for others, of kindness to animals, or of unselfishness on their part; and constantly maintained that she was in the right, and I in the wrong, when we differed on the point of their unusual excellence. All this must be borne in mind while reading the following letters. And it must likewise be borne in mind—by those who, surviving her, look back upon her life from their mount of observation—how no distaste, no suffering ever made her shrink from any course which she believed it to be her duty to engage in.

'March 3, 1841.

'I told you some time since that I meant to get a situation, and when I said so my resolution was quite fixed. I felt that, however often I was disappointed, I had no intention of relinquishing my efforts. After being severely baffled two or three times—after a world of trouble, in the way of correspondence and interviews—I have at length succeeded, and am fairly established in my new place.

. . . . . .

'The house is not very large, but exceedingly comfortable and well regulated; the grounds are fine and extensive. In taking the place I have made a large sacrifice in the way of salary, in the hope of securing comfort—by which word I do not mean to express good eating and drinking, or warm fire, or a soft bed, but the society of cheerful faces, and minds and hearts not dug out of a lead mine, or cut from a marble quarry. My salary is not really more than 16*l.* per annum, though it is nominally 20*l.*, but the expense of washing will be deducted therefrom. My pupils are two in number, a girl of eight and a boy of six. As to my employers, you will not expect me to say much about their characters when I tell you that I only arrived here yesterday. I have not the faculty of telling an individual's disposition at first sight. Before I can venture to pronounce on a character I must see it first under various lights and from various points of view. All I can say, therefore, is, both Mr. and Mrs. (White) seem to me good sort of people. I have as yet had no cause to complain of want of considerateness or civility. My pupils are wild and unbroken, but apparently well disposed. I wish I may be able to say as much next time I write to you. My earnest wish and endeavour will be to please them. If I can but feel that I am giving satisfaction, and if at the same time I can keep my health, I shall, I hope, be moderately happy. But no one but myself can tell how hard a governess's work is to me—for no one but myself is aware how utterly averse my whole mind and nature are to the employment. Do not think that I fail to blame myself for this, or that I leave any

means unemployed to conquer this feeling. Some of my greatest difficulties lie in things that would appear to you comparatively trivial. I find it so hard to repel the rude familiarity of children. I find it so difficult to ask either servants or mistress for anything I want, however much I want it. It is less pain for me to endure the greatest inconvenience than to go into the kitchen to request its removal. I am a fool. Heaven knows I cannot help it!

'Now can you tell me whether it is considered improper for governesses to ask their friends to come and see them? I do not mean, of course, to stay, but just for a call of an hour or two. If it is not absolutely treason, I do fervently request that you will contrive, in some way or other, to let me have a sight of your face. Yet I feel, at the same time, that I am making a very foolish and almost impracticable demand; yet this is only four miles from Birstall!'[1]

'March 21.

'You must excuse a very short answer to your most welcome letter; for my time is entirely occupied. Mrs. (White) expected a good deal of sewing from me. I cannot sew much during the day, on account of the children, who require the utmost attention. I am obliged, therefore, to devote the evenings to this business. Write to me often; very long letters. It will do both of us good. This place is far better than Swarcliffe, but God knows I have enough to do to keep a good heart in the matter. What you said has cheered me a little. I wish I could always act according to your advice. Home-sickness affects me sorely. I like Mr. (White) extremely. The children are over-indulged, and consequently hard at times to manage. *Do, do,* do come and see me; if it be a breach of etiquette, never mind. If you can only stop an hour, come. Talk no more about my forsaking you; my darling, I could not afford to do it. I find it is not in my nature to get on in this weary world without sympathy and attachment in some quarter; and

[1] This was a mistake. Birstall is ten miles from Rawdon.

seldom indeed do we find it. It is too great a treasure to be ever wantonly thrown away when once secured.'

Miss Brontë had not been many weeks in her new situation before she had a proof of the kind-hearted hospitality of her employers. Mr. (White) wrote to her father, and urgently invited him to come and make acquaintance with his daughter's new home, by spending a week with her in it; and Mrs. (White) expressed great regret when one of Miss Brontë's friends drove up to the house to leave a letter or parcel, without entering. So she found that all her friends might freely visit her, and that her father would be received with especial gladness. She thankfully acknowledged this kindness in writing to urge her friend afresh to come and see her, which she accordingly did.

'June, 1841.

'You can hardly fancy it possible, I dare say, that I cannot find a quarter of an hour to scribble a note in; but so it is; and when a note is written, it has to be carried a mile to the post, and that consumes nearly an hour, which is a large portion of the day. Mr. and Mrs. (White) have been gone a week. I heard from them this morning. No time is fixed for their return, but I hope it will not be delayed long, or I shall miss the chance of seeing Anne this vacation. She came home, I understand, last Wednesday, and is only to be allowed three weeks' vacation, because the family she is with are going to Scarborough. *I should like to see her*, to judge for myself of the state of her health. I dare not trust any other person's report; no one seems minute enough in their observations. I should very much have liked you to have seen her. I have got on very well with the servants and children so far; yet it is dreary, solitary work. You can tell as well as me the lonely feeling of being without a companion.'

Soon after this was written Mr. and Mrs. (White) returned, in time to allow Charlotte to go and look after Anne's health,

which, as she found to her intense anxiety, was far from strong. What could she do to nurse and cherish up this little sister, the youngest of them all? Apprehension about her brought up once more the idea of keeping a school. If, by this means, they three could live together, and maintain themselves, all might go well. They would have some time of their own, in which to try again and yet again at that literary career which, in spite of all baffling difficulties, was never quite set aside as an ultimate object: but far the strongest motive with Charlotte was the conviction that Anne's health was so delicate that it required a degree of tending which none but her sister could give. Thus she wrote during those midsummer holidays :—

'Haworth: July 18, 1841.

'We waited long and anxiously for you on the Thursday that you promised to come. I quite wearied my eyes with watching from the window, eye-glass in hand, and sometimes spectacles on nose. However, you are not to blame . . . and as to disappointment, why, all must suffer disappointment at some period or other of their lives. But a hundred things I had to say to you will now be forgotten, and never said. There is a project hatching in this house, which both Emily and I anxiously wished to discuss with you. The project is yet in its infancy, hardly peeping from its shell; and whether it will ever come out a full-fledged chicken, or will turn addle and die before it cheeps, is one of those considerations that are but dimly revealed by the oracles of futurity. Now, don't be nonplussed by all this metaphorical mystery. I talk of a plain and everyday occurrence, though, in Delphic style, I wrap up the information in figures of speech concerning eggs, chickens, etcætera, etcæterorum. To come to the point: papa and aunt talk, by fits and starts, of our—*id est*, Emily, Anne, and myself—commencing a school! I have often, you know, said how much I wished such a thing; but I never could conceive where the capital was to come from for making such a specu-

lation. I was well aware, indeed, that aunt had money, but I always considered that she was the last person who would offer a loan for the purpose in question. A loan, however, she *has* offered, or rather intimates that she perhaps *will* offer in case pupils can be secured, an eligible situation obtained, &c. This sounds very fair, but still there are matters to be considered which throw something of a damp upon the scheme. I do not expect that aunt will sink more than 150*l.* in such a venture ; and would it be possible to establish a respectable (not by any means a *showy*) school, and to commence housekeeping with a capital of only that amount? Propound the question to your sister, if you think she can answer it ; if not, don't say a word on the subject. As to getting into debt, that is a thing we could none of us reconcile our mind to for a moment. We do not care how modest, how humble our commencement be, so it be made on sure grounds, and have a safe foundation. In thinking of all possible and impossible places where we could establish a school, I have thought of Burlington, or rather of the neighbourhood of Burlington. Do you remember whether there was any other school there besides that of Miss ——? This is, of course, a perfectly crude and random idea. There are a hundred reasons why it should be an impracticable one. We have no connections, no acquaintances there ; it is far from home, &c. Still, I fancy the ground in the East Riding is less fully occupied than in the West. Much inquiry and consideration will be necessary, of course, before any place is decided on ; and I fear much time will elapse before any plan is executed. . . . Write as soon as you can. I shall not leave my present situation till my future prospects assume a more fixed and definite aspect.' [1]

[1] In certain fragments of a diary kept by Emily and Anne we find the following memoranda written at this time—on Emily's birthday, July 30, 1841. Emily writes—

'It is Friday evening, near 9 o'clock—wild, rainy weather. I am seated in the dining-room, having just concluded tidying our desk boxes, writing this document. Papa is in the parlour—aunt upstairs in her

room. She has been reading *Blackwood's Magazine* to papa. Victoria and Adelaide are ensconced in the peat-house. Keeper is in the kitchen —Hero in his cage. We are all stout and hearty, as I hope is the case with Charlotte, Branwell, and Anne, of whom the first is at John White, Esq., Upperwood House, Rawdon; the second is at Luddenden Foot; and the third is, I believe, at Scarborough, inditing perhaps a paper corresponding to this.

'A scheme is at present in agitation for setting us up in a school of our own; as yet nothing is determined, but I hope and trust it may go on and prosper and answer our highest expectations. This day four years I wonder whether we shall still be dragging on in our present condition or established to our hearts' content. Time will show.

'I guess that at the time appointed for the opening of this paper we—*i.e.* Charlotte, Anne, and I—shall be all merrily seated in our own sitting-room in some pleasant and flourishing seminary, having just gathered in for the midsummer Ladyday. Our debts will be paid off, and we shall have cash in hand to a considerable amount. Papa, aunt, and Branwell will either have been or be coming to visit us. It will be a fine warm summer evening, very different from this bleak look-out, and Anne and I will perchance slip out into the garden for a few minutes to peruse our papers. I hope either this or something better will be the case.'

Anne writes—

'July 30, A.D. 1841. This is Emily's birthday. She has now completed her twenty-third year, and is, I believe, at home. Charlotte is a governess in the family of Mr. White. Branwell is a clerk in the railroad station at Luddenden Foot, and I am a governess in the family of Mr. Robinson. I dislike the situation and wish to change it for another. I am now at Scarborough. My pupils are gone to bed, and I am hastening to finish this before I follow them.

'We are thinking of setting up a school of our own, but nothing definite is settled about it yet, and we do not know whether we shall be able to or not. I hope we shall. And I wonder what will be our condition and how or where we shall all be on this day four years hence; at which time, if all be well, I shall be twenty-five years and six months old, Emily will be twenty-seven years old, Branwell twenty-eight years and one month, and Charlotte twenty-nine years and a quarter. We are now all separate and not likely to meet again for many a weary week, but we are none of us ill that I know of and all are doing something for our own livelihood except Emily, who, however, is as busy as any of us, and in reality earns her food and raiment as much as we do.

How little know we what we are,
How less what we may be!

A fortnight afterwards we see that the seed has been sown which was to grow up into a plan materially influencing her future life.

'August 7, 1841.

'This is Saturday evening; I have put the children to bed; now I am going to sit down and answer your letter. I am again by myself—housekeeper and governess—for Mr. and Mrs. (White) are staying near Tadcaster. To speak truth, though I am solitary while they are away, it is still by far the happiest part of my time. The children are under decent control, the servants are very observant and attentive to me, and the occasional absence of the master and mistress relieves me from the duty of always endeavouring to seem cheerful and conversable. Martha (Taylor), it appears, is in the way of enjoying great advantage; so is Mary, for you will be surprised to hear that she is returning immediately to the Continent with her brother; not, however, to stay there, but to take a month's tour and recreation. I have had a long letter from Mary, and a packet containing a present of a very handsome black silk scarf, and a pair of beautiful kid gloves, bought at Brussels. Of course I was in one sense pleased with the gift—pleased that they should think of me so far off, amidst the excitements of one of the most splendid capitals of Europe; and yet it felt irksome to

'Four years ago I was at school. Since then I have been a governess at Blake Hall, left it, come to Thorp Green, and seen the sea and York Minster. Emily has been a teacher at Miss Patchett's school, and left it. Charlotte has left Miss Wooler's, been a governess at Mrs. Sidgwick's, left her, and gone to Mrs. White's. Branwell has given up painting, been a tutor in Cumberland, left it, and become a clerk on the railroad. Tabby has left us, Martha Brown has come in her place. We have got Keeper, got a sweet little cat and lost it, and also got a hawk. Got a wild goose, which has flown away, and three tame ones, one of which has been killed. All these diversities, with many others, are things we did not expect or foresee in the July of 1837. What will the next four years bring forth? Providence only knows. But we ourselves have sustained very little alteration since that time. I have the same faults that I had then, only I have more wisdom and experience, and a little more self-possession than I then enjoyed.'

accept it. I should think Mary and Martha have not more than sufficient pocket-money to supply themselves. I wish they had testified their regard by a less expensive token. Mary's letters spoke of some of the pictures and cathedrals she had seen—pictures the most exquisite, cathedrals the most venerable. I hardly know what swelled to my throat as I read her letter: such a vehement impatience of restraint and steady work; such a strong wish for wings—wings such as wealth can furnish; such an urgent thirst to see, to know, to learn; something internal seemed to expand bodily for a minute. I was tantalised by the consciousness of faculties unexercised—then all collapsed, and I despaired. My dear, I would hardly make that confession to any one but yourself; and to you, rather in a letter than *viva voce*. These rebellious and absurd emotions were only momentary; I quelled them in five minutes. I hope they will not revive, for they were acutely painful. No further steps have been taken about the project I mentioned to you, nor probably will be for the present; but Emily, and Anne, and I keep it in view. It is our pole star, and we look to it in all circumstances of despondency. I begin to suspect I am writing in a strain which will make you think I am unhappy. This is far from being the case; on the contrary, I know my place is a favourable one, for a governess. What dismays and haunts me sometimes is a conviction that I have no natural knack for my vocation. If teaching only were requisite, it would be smooth and easy; but it is the living in other people's houses—the estrangement from one's real character—the adoption of a cold, rigid, apathetic exterior, that is painful. . . . You will not mention our school project at present. A project not actually commenced is always uncertain. Write to me often, my dear Nell; you *know* your letters are valued. Your "loving child" (as you choose to call me so), C. B.

'P.S.—I am well in health; don't fancy I am not; but I have one aching feeling at my heart (I must allude to it,

though I had resolved not to). It is about Anne; she has so much to endure; far, far more than I ever had. When my thoughts turn to her, they always see her as a patient, persecuted stranger. I know what concealed susceptibility is in her nature, when her feelings are wounded. I wish I could be with her, to administer a little balm. She is more lonely—less gifted with the power of making friends, even than I am. "Drop the subject."'

She could bear much for herself; but she could not patiently bear the sorrows of others, especially of her sisters; and again, of the two sisters, the idea of the little, gentle, youngest suffering in lonely patience was insupportable to her. Something must be done. No matter if the desired end were far away; all time was lost in which she was not making progress, however slow, towards it. To have a school was to have some portion of daily leisure, uncontrolled but by her own sense of duty; it was for the three sisters, loving each other with so passionate an affection, to be together under one roof, and yet earning their own subsistence; above all, it was to have the power of watching over those two whose life and happiness were ever to Charlotte far more than her own. But no trembling impatience should lead her to take an unwise step in haste. She inquired in every direction she could as to the chances which a new school might have of success. In all there seemed more establishments like the one which the sisters wished to set up than could be supported. What was to be done? Superior advantages must be offered. But how? They themselves abounded in thought, power, and information; but these are qualifications scarcely fit to be inserted in a prospectus. Of French they knew something: enough to read it fluently, but hardly enough to teach it in competition with natives or professional masters. Emily and Anne had some knowledge of music; but here again it was doubtful whether, without more instruction, they could engage to give lessons in it.

Just about this time Miss Wooler was thinking of relinquishing her school at Dewsbury Moor, and offered to give it up in favour of her old pupils the Brontës. A sister of hers had taken the active management since the time when Charlotte was a teacher; but the number of pupils had diminished; and, if the Brontës undertook it, they would have to try and work it up to its former state of prosperity. This, again, would require advantages on their part which they did not at present possess, but which Charlotte caught a glimpse of. She resolved to follow the clue, and never to rest till she had reached a successful issue. With the forced calm of a suppressed eagerness, that sends a glow of desire through every word of the following letter, she wrote to her aunt thus :—

'September 29, 1841.

'Dear Aunt,—I have heard nothing of Miss Wooler yet since I wrote to her, intimating that I would accept her offer. I cannot conjecture the reason of this long silence, unless some unforeseen impediment has occurred in concluding the bargain. Meantime a plan has been suggested and approved by Mr. and Mrs. (White)' (the father and mother of her pupils) 'and others, which I wish now to impart to you. My friends recommend me, if I desire to secure permanent success, to delay commencing the school for six months longer, and by all means to contrive, by hook or by crook, to spend the intervening time in some school on the Continent. They say schools in England are so numerous, competition so great, that without some such step towards attaining superiority we shall probably have a very hard struggle, and may fail in the end. They say, moreover, that the loan of 100*l.*, which you have been so kind as to offer us, will, perhaps, not be all required now, as Miss Wooler will lend us the furniture; and that, if the speculation is intended to be a good and successful one, half the sum, at least, ought to be laid out in the manner I have mentioned, thereby insuring a more speedy repayment both of interest and principal.

'I would not go to France or to Paris. I would go to Brussels, in Belgium. The cost of the journey there, at the dearest rate of travelling, would be 5*l.*; living is there little more than half as dear as it is in England, and the facilities for education are equal or superior to any other place in Europe. In half a year I could acquire a thorough familiarity with French. I could improve greatly in Italian, and even get a dash of German, *i.e.* providing my health continued as good as it is now. Mary is now staying at Brussels, at a first-rate establishment there. I should not think of going to the Château de Kokleberg, where she is resident, as the terms are much too high; but if I wrote to her, she, with the assistance of Mrs. Jenkins, the wife of the British Chaplain, would be able to secure me a cheap, decent residence and respectable protection. I should have the opportunity of seeing her frequently; she would make me acquainted with the city; and, with the assistance of her cousins, I should probably be introduced to connections far more improving, polished, and cultivated than any I have yet known.

'These are advantages which would turn to real account, when we actually commenced a school; and, if Emily could share them with me, we could take a footing in the world afterwards which we could never do now. I say Emily instead of Anne; for Anne might take her turn at some future period, if our school answered. I feel certain, while I am writing, that you will see the propriety of what I say. You always like to use your money to the best advantage. You are not fond of making shabby purchases; when you do confer a favour, it is often done in style; and depend upon it 50*l.*, or 100*l.*, thus laid out, would be well employed. Of course I know no other friend in the world to whom I could apply on this subject except yourself. I feel an absolute conviction that, if this advantage were allowed us, it would be the making of us for life. Papa will, perhaps, think it a wild and ambitious scheme; but who ever rose in the world without ambition? When he left Ireland to go to Cambridge

University, he was as ambitious as I am now. I want us *all* to get on. I know we have talents, and I want them to be turned to account. I look to you, aunt, to help us. I think you will not refuse. I know, if you consent, it shall not be my fault if you ever repent your kindness.'

This letter was written from the house in which she was residing as governess. It was some little time before an answer came. Much had to be talked over between the father and aunt in Haworth Parsonage. At last consent was given. Then, and not till then, she confided her plan to an intimate friend. She was not one to talk overmuch about any project, while it remained uncertain—to speak about her labour, in any direction, while its result was doubtful.

'November 2, 1841.

'Now let us begin to quarrel. In the first place, I must consider whether I will commence operations on the defensive or the offensive. The defensive, I think. You say, and I see plainly, that your feelings have been hurt by an apparent want of confidence on my part. You heard from others of Miss Wooler's overtures before I communicated them to you myself. This is true. I was deliberating on plans important to my future prospects. I never exchanged a letter with you on the subject. True again. This appears strange conduct to a friend, near and dear, long known, and never found wanting. Most true. I cannot give you my *excuses* for this behaviour; this word *excuse* implies confession of a fault, and I do not feel that I have been in fault. The plain fact is, I *was* not, I am not now, certain of my destiny. On the contrary, I have been most uncertain, perplexed with contradictory schemes and proposals. My time, as I have often told you, is fully occupied; yet I had many letters to write, which it was absolutely necessary should be written. I knew it would avail nothing to write to you then to say I was in doubt and uncertainty—hoping this, fearing that, anxious, eagerly desirous to do what seemed impossible to be done. When I thought of you in that busy interval, it

was to resolve that you should know all when my way was clear, and my grand end attained. If I could I would always work in silence and obscurity, and let my efforts be known by their results. Miss Wooler did most kindly propose that I should come to Dewsbury Moor, and attempt to revive the school her sister had relinquished. She offered me the use of her furniture. At first I received the proposal cordially, and prepared to do my utmost to bring about success; but a fire was kindled in my very heart, which I could not quench. I so longed to increase my attainments —to become something better than I am; a glimpse of what I felt I showed to you in one of my former letters—only a glimpse; Mary cast oil upon the flames—encouraged me, and in her own strong, energetic language heartened me on. I longed to go to Brussels; but how could I get there? I wished for one, at least, of my sisters to share the advantage with me. I fixed on Emily. She deserved the reward, I knew. How could the point be managed? In extreme excitement I wrote a letter home, which carried the day. I made an appeal to my aunt for assistance, which was answered by consent. Things are not settled; yet it is sufficient to say we have a *chance* of going for half a year. Dewsbury Moor is relinquished. Perhaps fortunately so. In my secret soul I believe there is no cause to regret it. My plans for the future are bounded to this intention: if I once get to Brussels, and if my health is spared I will do my best to make the utmost of every advantage that shall come within my reach. When the half-year is expired I will do what I can.[1]

. . . . . .

'Believe me, though I was born in April, the month of cloud and sunshine, I am not changeful. My spirits are unequal, and sometimes I speak vehemently, and sometimes I say nothing at all; but I have a steady regard for you, and

[1] Here followed some advice to her friend on marriage, the latter having at the moment a zealous wooer. The advice concluded, 'I believe it is better to marry *to* love than to marry *for* love.'

if you will let the cloud and shower pass by, be sure the sun is always behind, obscured, but still existing.'

At Christmas she left her situation, after a parting with her employers which seems to have affected and touched her greatly. 'They only made too much of me,' was her remark, after leaving this family; 'I did not deserve it.'

All four children hoped to meet together at their father's house this December. Branwell expected to have a short leave of absence from his employment as a clerk on the Leeds and Manchester Railway, in which he had been engaged for five months. Anne arrived before Christmas Day. She had rendered herself so valuable in her difficult situation that her employers vehemently urged her to return, although she had announced her resolution to leave them; partly on account of the harsh treatment she had received, and partly because her stay at home, during her sisters' absence in Belgium, seemed desirable, when the age of the three remaining inhabitants of the parsonage was taken into consideration.

After some correspondence and much talking over plans at home, it seemed better, in consequence of letters which they received from Brussels giving a discouraging account of the schools there, that Charlotte and Emily should go to an institution at Lille, in the north of France, which was highly recommended by Baptist Noel and other clergymen. Indeed, at the end of January it was arranged that they were to set off for this place in three weeks, under the escort of a French lady, then visiting in London. The terms were 50*l.* each pupil, for board and French alone; but a separate room was to be allowed for this sum; without this indulgence it was lower. Charlotte writes—

'January 20, 1842.[1]

'I consider it kind in aunt to consent to an extra sum for

[1] This letter to Miss Ellen Nussey opened as follows:—

'I cannot quite enter into your friends' reasons for not permitting you to come to Haworth; but, as it is at present, and in all human

a separate room. We shall find it a great privilege in many ways. I regret the change from Brussels to Lille on many accounts, chiefly that I shall not see Martha. Mary has been indefatigably kind in providing me with information. She has grudged no labour, and scarcely any expense, to that end. Mary's price is above rubies. I have, in fact, two friends—you and her—staunch and true, in whose faith and sincerity I have as strong a belief as I have in the Bible. I have bothered you both—you especially; but you always get the tongs and heap coals of fire upon my head. I have had letters to write lately to Brussels, to Lille, and to London. I have lots of chemises, night-gowns, pocket-handkerchiefs, and pockets to make; besides clothes to repair. I have been, every week since I came home, expecting to see Branwell, and he has never been able to get over yet. We fully expect him, however, next Saturday. Under these circumstances how can I go visiting? You tantalise me to death with talking of conversations by the fireside. Depend upon it we are not to have any such for many a long month to come. I get an interesting impression of old age upon my face; and when you see me next I shall certainly wear caps and spectacles.'

probability will be for an indefinite time to come, impossible for me to get to Brookroyd, the balance of accounts is not so unequal as it might otherwise be. We expect to leave England in less than three weeks, but we are not yet certain of the day, as it will depend upon the convenience of a French lady now in London, Madame Marzials, under whose escort we are to sail. Our place of destination is changed. Papa received an unfavourable account from Mr. or rather Mrs. Jenkins of the French schools in Brussels, and on further inquiry an institution in Lille, in the north of France, was recommended by Baptist Noel and other clergymen, and to that place it is decided that we are to go. The terms are fifty pounds for each pupil for board and French alone.'

CHAPTER XI

I AM not aware of all the circumstances which led to the relinquishment of the Lille plan. Brussels had had from the first a strong attraction for Charlotte; and the idea of going there, in preference to any other place, had only been given up in consequence of the information received of the second-rate character of its schools. In one of her letters reference has been made to Mrs. Jenkins, the wife of the chaplain of the British Embassy. At the request of his brother—a clergyman, living not many miles from Haworth, and an acquaintance of Mr. Brontë's—she made much inquiry, and at length, after some discouragement in her search, heard of a school which seemed in every respect desirable. There was an English lady who had long lived in the Orleans family, amidst the various fluctuations of their fortunes, and who, when the Princess Louise was married to King Leopold, accompanied her to Brussels, in the capacity of reader. This lady's granddaughter was receiving her education at the *pensionnat* of Madame Héger; and so satisfied was the grandmother with the kind of instruction given that she named the establishment, with high encomiums, to Mrs. Jenkins; and, in consequence, it was decided that, if the terms suited, Miss Brontë and Emily should proceed thither. M. Héger informs me that, on receipt of a letter from Charlotte, making very particular inquiries as to the possible amount of what are usually termed 'extras,' he and his wife were so much struck by the simple, earnest tone of the letter that they said to each other, 'These are the daughters of an English pastor, of moderate means, anxious to learn with an ulterior view of instructing others and to whom the

risk of additional expense is of great consequence. Let us name a specific sum, within which all expenses shall be included.' [1]

This was accordingly done; the agreement was concluded, and the Brontës prepared to leave their native county for the first time, if we except the melancholy and

[1] The circular issued by Madame Héger ran as follows:—

MAISON D'ÉDUCATION
Pour les jeunes Demoiselles.
SOUS LA DIRECTION
DE MADAME HÉGER-PARENT,
Rue d'Isabelle 31, à Bruxelles.

Cet établissement est situé dans l'endroit le plus salubre de la ville.

Le cours d'instruction, basé sur la Religion, comprend essentiellement la Langue Française, l'Histoire, l'Arithmétique, la Géographie, l'Ecriture. ainsi que tous les ouvrages à l'aiguille que doit connaître une demoiselle bien élevée.

La santé des élèves est l'objet d'une surveillance active; les parents peuvent se reposer avec sécurité sur les mesures qui ont été prises à cet égard dans l'établissement.

Le prix de la pension est de 650 francs, celui de la demi-pension est de 350 francs, payables par quartiers et d'avance. Il n'y a d'autres frais accessoires que les étrennes des domestiques.

Il n'est fait aucune déduction pour le temps que les élèves passent chez elles dans le courant de l'année. Le nombre des élèves étant limité, les parents qui désireraient reprendre leurs enfants sont tenus d'en prévenir la directrice trois mois d'avance.

Les leçons de musique, de langues étrangères, etc. etc., sont au compte des parents.

Le costume des pensionnaires est uniforme.

La directrice s'engage à répondre à toutes les demandes qui pourraient lui être adressées par les parents relativement aux autres détails de son institution.

OBJETS À FOURNIR.

Lit complet, bassin, aiguière et draps de lit.
Serviettes de table.
Une malle fermant à clef.
Un couvert d'argent.
Un gobelet.

Si les élèves ne sont pas de Bruxelles, on leur fournira un lit garni moyennant 34 francs par an.

memorable residence at Cowan Bridge. Mr. Brontë determined to accompany his daughters. Mary and her brother, who were experienced in foreign travelling, were also of the party. Charlotte first saw London in the day or two they now stopped there; and, from an expression in one of her subsequent letters, they all, I believe, stayed at the Chapter Coffee House, Paternoster Row—a strange, old-fashioned tavern, of which I shall have more to say hereafter.

Mary's account of their journey is thus given:—

'In passing through London she seemed to think our business was, and ought to be, to see all the pictures and statues we could. She knew the artists, and knew where other productions of theirs were to be found. I don't remember what we saw except St. Paul's. Emily was like her in these habits of mind, but certainly never took her opinion, but always had one to offer. . . . I don't know what Charlotte thought of Brussels. We arrived in the dark, and went next morning to our respective schools to see them. We were, of course, much preoccupied, and our prospects gloomy. Charlotte used to like the country round Brussels. "At the top of every hill you see something." She took long solitary walks on the occasional holidays.'

Mr. Brontë took his daughters to the Rue d'Isabelle, Brussels; remained one night at Mr. Jenkins's; and straight returned to his wild Yorkshire village.

What a contrast to that must the Belgian capital have presented to those two young women thus left behind! Suffering acutely from every strange and unaccustomed contact—far away from their beloved home and the dear moors beyond—their indomitable will was their great support. Charlotte's own words, with regard to Emily, are—

After the age of twenty, having meantime studied alone with diligence and perseverance, she went with me to an establishment on the Continent. The same suffering and conflict ensued, heightened by the strong recoil of her upright, heretic, and English spirit from the gentle Jesuitry of

the foreign and Romish system. Once more she seemed sinking, but this time she rallied through the mere force of resolution: with inward remorse and shame she looked back on her former failure, and resolved to conquer, but the victory cost her dear. She was never happy till she carried her hard-won knowledge back to the remote English village the old parsonage house, and desolate Yorkshire hills.' [1]

They wanted learning. They came for learning. They would learn. Where they had a distinct purpose to be achieved in intercourse with their fellows they forgot themselves; at all other times they were miserably shy. Mrs. Jenkins told me that she used to ask them to spend Sundays and holidays with her, until she found that they felt more pain than pleasure from such visits. Emily hardly ever uttered more than a monosyllable. Charlotte was sometimes excited sufficiently to speak eloquently and well—on certain subjects—but, before her tongue was thus loosened, she had a habit of gradually wheeling round on her chair, so as almost to conceal her face from the person to whom she was speaking.

And yet there was much in Brussels to strike a responsive chord in her powerful imagination. At length she was seeing somewhat of that grand old world of which she had dreamed. As the gay crowds passed by her so had gay crowds paced those streets for centuries, in all their varying costumes. Every spot told an historic tale, extending back into the fabulous ages when Jan and Jannika, the aboriginal giant and giantess, looked over the wall, forty feet high, of what is now the Rue Villa Hermosa, and peered down upon the new settlers who were to turn them out of the country in which they had lived since the Deluge. The great solemn Cathedral of St. Gudule, the religious paintings, the striking forms and ceremonies of the Romish Church—all made a deep impression on the girls, fresh from the bare walls and simple worship of Haworth Church. And then they were

[1] Introduction to *Selections from Poems by Ellis Bell.*

indignant with themselves for having been susceptible of this impression, and their stout Protestant hearts arrayed themselves against the false Duessa that had thus imposed upon them.

The very building they occupied as pupils, in Madame Héger's *pensionnat*, had its own ghostly train of splendid associations, marching for ever, in shadowy procession, through and through the ancient rooms and shaded alleys of the gardens. From the splendour of to-day in the Rue Royale, if you turn aside, near the statue of General Beliard, you look down four flights of broad stone steps upon the Rue d'Isabelle. The chimneys of the houses in it are below your feet. Opposite to the lowest flight of steps there is a large old mansion facing you, with a spacious walled garden behind—and to the right of it. In front of this garden, on the same side as the mansion, and with great boughs of trees sweeping over their lowly roofs, is a row of small, picturesque, old-fashioned cottages, not unlike, in degree and uniformity, to the almshouses so often seen in an English country town. The Rue d'Isabelle looks as though it had been untouched by the innovations of the builder for the last three centuries; and yet any one might drop a stone into it from the back windows of the grand modern hotels in the Rue Royale, built and furnished in the newest Parisian fashion.[1]

In the thirteenth century the Rue d'Isabelle was called

[1] The Rue d'Isabelle has been altered by the builder within the past year or two (1898–9), the Pensionnat Héger having been abandoned and replaced by municipal school buildings. The exterior is unchanged; the interior is entirely altered. I visited the house in 1897, and found the place a desert; the garden, wild and overgrown, yet containing the very pear trees that had pleased Charlotte and her sister. Here also were the glass corridors with vines trailing over them, the empty dormitories, the oratory with the crucifix removed; not the slightest structural alteration had taken place since the days when Charlotte and Emily Brontë had been pupils; and the same family, the daughters of Madame Héger, still engaged in school-keeping, had but just vacated the building at the instigation of the city authorities.

THE HÉGER 'PENSIONNAT,' RUE D'ISABELLE, BRUSSELS—CENTRAL AVENUE OF THE GARDEN AS IT WAS IN 1843.

the Fossé-aux-Chiens; and the kennels for the ducal hounds occupied the place where Madame Héger's *pensionnat* now stands. A hospital (in the ancient large meaning of the word) succeeded to the kennel. The houseless and the poor, perhaps the leprous, were received, by the brethren of a religious order, in a building on this sheltered site; and what had been a *fossé* for defence was filled up with herb gardens and orchards for upwards of a hundred years. Then came the aristocratic guild of the cross-bow men—that company the members whereof were required to prove their noble descent untainted for so many generations before they could be admitted into the guild; and, being admitted, were required to swear a solemn oath that no other pastime or exercise should take up any part of their leisure, the whole of which was to be devoted to the practice of the noble art of shooting with the cross-bow. Once a year a grand match was held, under the patronage of some saint, to whose church steeple was affixed the bird, or semblance of a bird, to be hit by the victor.[1] The conqueror in the game was Roï des Arbalétriers for the coming year, and received a jewelled decoration accordingly, which he was entitled to wear for twelve months; after which he restored it to the guild, to be again striven for. The family of him who died during the year that he was king were bound to present the decoration to the church of the patron saint of the guild, and to furnish a similar prize to be contended for afresh. These

[1] Scott describes the sport, 'Shooting at the Popinjay,' 'as an ancient game formerly practised with archery, but at this period (1679) with firearms. This was the figure of a bird decked with particoloured feathers, so as to resemble a popinjay or parrot. It was suspended to a pole, and served for a mark at which the competitors discharged their fusees and carbines in rotation, at the distance of seventy paces. He whose ball brought down the mark held the proud title of Captain of the Popinjay for the remainder of the day, and was usually escorted in triumph to the most respectable change-house in the neighbourhood, where the evening was closed with conviviality, conducted under his auspices, and, if he was able to maintain it, at his expense.'—*Old Mortality* (*Note by Mrs. Gaskell*).

noble cross-bow men of the Middle Ages formed a sort of armed guard to the powers in existence, and almost invariably took the aristocratic in preference to the democratic side, in the numerous civil dissensions of the Flemish towns. Hence they were protected by the authorities, and easily obtained favourable and sheltered sites for their exercise ground. And thus they came to occupy the old fosse, and took possession of the great orchard of the hospital, lying tranquil and sunny in the hollow below the rampart.

But, in the seventeenth century, it became necessary to construct a street through the exercise ground of the 'Arbalétriers du Grand Serment,' and, after much delay, the company were induced by the beloved Infanta Isabella to give up the requisite plot of ground. In recompense for this, Isabella—who herself was a member of the guild, and had even shot down the bird and been queen in 1615—made many presents to the arbalétriers; and, in return, the grateful city, which had long wanted a nearer road to St. Gudule, but been baffled by the noble archers, called the street after her name. She, as a sort of indemnification to the arbalétriers, caused a 'great mansion' to be built for their accommodation in the new Rue d'Isabelle. This mansion was placed in front of their exercise ground, and was of a square shape. On a remote part of the walls, may still be read—

PHILLIPPO IIII. HISPAN. REGE ISABELLA-CLARA-EUGENIA HISPAN. INFANS MAGNÆ GULDÆ REGINA GULDÆ FRATRIBUS POSUIT.

In that mansion were held all the splendid feasts of the Grand Serment des Arbalétriers. The master archer lived there constantly, in order to be ever at hand to render his services to the guild. The great saloon was also used for the Court balls and festivals, when the archers were not admitted. The Infanta caused other and smaller houses to be built in her new street, to serve as residences for her 'garde noble;' and for her 'garde bourgeoise' a small habitation each, some of which still remain, to remind us of English almshouses. The 'great mansion,' with its qua-

drangular form ; the spacious saloon—once used for the archducal balls, where the dark, grave Spaniards mixed with the blond nobility of Brabant and Flanders—now a schoolroom for Belgian girls ; the cross-bow men's archery-ground—all are there—the *pensionnat* of Madame Héger.[1]

This lady was assisted in the work of instruction by her husband—a kindly, wise, good, and religious man—whose acquaintance I am glad to have made, and who has furnished me with some interesting details, from his wife's recollections and his own, of the two Miss Brontës during their residence in Brussels. He had the better opportunities of watching them from his giving lessons in the French language and literature in the school. A short extract from a letter, written to me by a French lady resident in Brussels, and well qualified to judge, will help to show the estimation in which he is held.

'Je ne connais pas personnellement M. Héger, mais je sais qu'il est peu de caractères aussi nobles, aussi admirables que

[1] A letter by Madame Héger which was addressed to Miss Lætitia Wheelwright, one of the English pupils at the Pensionnat Héger will be read with interest :—

'Ma chère Lætitia,—Je me proposais de faire visite à madame votre maman hier matin. J'ai été indisposée et obligée de garder la chambre ; aujourd'hui je suis mieux, mais ne pouvant sortir je désire au moins savoir de vos nouvelles. Comment se porte votre maman ? Je crains bien que les veilles, la fatigue et le chagrin n'altèrent sa santé. Heureusement tous ses enfants sont si bons, si bien élevés, qu'elle trouvera dans leurs soins une compensation à la perte cruelle qu'elle a faite.

'Lorsque j'irai voir vos parents je leur dirai combien j'apprécie tout ce que la lettre de votre papa a d'obligeant. Je lui suis bien reconnaissante d'avoir pensé à nous dans un moment aussi douloureux et qui laissera ici, comme chez vous, de longues traces. Le petit ange que nous pleurons mérite tous nos regrets, cependant nous devons nous dire qu'il est à l'abri des misères et des chagrins que nous avons encore à supporter.

'Adieu, ma chère Lætitia ; embrassez pour moi vos petites sœurs, et présentez à vos chers parents, que j'estime chaque jour davantage, ma respectueuse affection.

'Votre dévouée

'Z. Héger.

Lundi, 21 9bre.'

le sien. Il est un des membres les plus zélés de cette Société de S. Vincent de Paul dont je t'ai déjà parlé, et ne se contente pas de servir les pauvres et les malades, mais leur consacre encore les soirées. Après des journées absorbées tout entières par les devoirs que sa place lui impose, il réunit les pauvres, les ouvriers, leur donne des cours gratuits, et trouve encore le moyen de les amuser en les instruisant. Ce dévouement te dira assez que M. Héger est profondément et ouvertement religieux. Il a des manières franches et avenantes; il se fait aimer de tous ceux qui l'approchent, et surtout des enfants. Il a la parole facile, et possède à un haut degré l'éloquence du bon sens et du cœur. Il n'est point auteur. Homme de zèle et de conscience, il vient de se démettre des fonctions élevées et lucratives qu'il exerçait à l'Athénée, celles de Préfet des Etudes, parce qu'il ne peut y réaliser le bien qu'il avait espéré, introduire l'enseignement religieux dans le programme des études. J'ai vu une fois Madame Héger, qui a quelque chose de froid et de compassé dans son maintien, et qui prévient peu en sa faveur. Je la crois pourtant aimée et appréciée par ses élèves.'

There were from eighty to a hundred pupils in the *pensionnat* when Charlotte and Emily Brontë entered it in February 1842.

M. Héger's account is that they knew nothing of French.[1] I suspect they knew as much (or as little), for all conversational purposes, as any English girls do who have never been abroad, and have only learnt the idioms and pronunciation from an Englishwoman. The two sisters clung together, and kept apart from the herd of happy, boisterous, well befriended Belgian girls, who, in their turn, thought the new English pupils wild and scared-looking, with strange,

[1] Charlotte Brontë had made a translation into English verse from Voltaire's *Henriade* when quite a child—in 1830—and a simple and not very accurate letter in that language to her friend Ellen Nussey is given *ante*, p. 123; but to translate from the French, and even to write simple letters, is not to *know* the language as a professor would define knowledge. Charlotte was probably too shy to attempt to speak a word.

odd, insular ideas about dress; for Emily had taken a fancy to the fashion, ugly and preposterous even during its reign, of gigot sleeves, and persisted in wearing them long after they were 'gone out.' Her petticoats, too, had not a curve or a wave in them, but hung down straight and long, clinging to her lank figure. The sisters spoke to no one but from necessity.[1] They were too full of earnest thought, and of the exile's sick yearning, to be ready for careless conversation or merry game. M. Héger, who had done little but observe, during the first few weeks of their residence in the Rue d'Isabelle, perceived that with their unusual characters, and extraordinary talents, a different mode must be adopted from that in which he generally taught French to English girls. He seems to have rated Emily's genius as something even higher than Charlotte's; and her estimation of their relative powers was the same. Emily had a head for logic, and a capability of argument, unusual in a man, and rare indeed in a woman, according to M. Héger. Impairing the force of this gift was a stubborn tenacity of will, which rendered her obtuse to all reasoning where her own wishes or her own sense of right was concerned. 'She should have been a man—a great navigator,' said M. Héger in speaking of her. 'Her powerful reason would have deduced new spheres of discovery from the knowledge of the old; and her strong, imperious will would never have been daunted by opposition or difficulty; never have given way but with life.' And yet, moreover, her faculty of imagination was such that, if she had written a history, her view of scenes and characters would have been so vivid, and so powerfully expressed, and supported by such a show of argument, that it would have dominated over the reader, whatever might have been his previous opinions or his cooler perceptions of its truth.

[1] Charlotte Brontë was thoroughly insular in her attitude towards her Belgian schoolfellows. Her friendship with Lætitia Wheelwright, one of the four English girls in the school, began when she observed Miss Wheelwright looking round contemptuously upon her companions. 'It was so very English,' Miss Brontë remarked.

But she appeared egotistical and exacting compared with Charlotte, who was always unselfish (this is M. Héger's testimony); and in the anxiety of the elder to make her younger sister contented she allowed her to exercise a kind of unconscious tyranny over her.

After consulting with his wife M. Héger told them that he meant to dispense with the old method of grounding in grammar, vocabulary, &c., and to proceed on a new plan—something similar to what he had occasionally adopted with the elder among his French and Belgian pupils. He proposed to read to them some of the masterpieces of the most celebrated French authors (such as Casimir de la Vigne's poem on the 'Death of Joan of Arc,' parts of Bossuet, the admirable translation of the noble letter of St. Ignatius to the Roman Christians in the 'Bibliothèque Choisie des Pères de l'Eglise,' &c.), and, after having thus impressed the complete effect of the whole, to analyse the parts with them, pointing out in what such or such an author excelled, and where were the blemishes. He believed that he had to do with pupils capable, from their ready sympathy with the intellectual, the refined, the polished, or the noble, of catching the echo of a style, and so reproducing their own thoughts in a somewhat similar manner.

After explaining his plan to them he awaited their reply. Emily spoke first, and said that she saw no good to be derived from it; and that, by adopting it, they would lose all originality of thought and expression. She would have entered into an argument on the subject, but for this M. Héger had no time. Charlotte then spoke; she also doubted the success of the plan; but she would follow out M. Héger's advice, because she was bound to obey him while she was his pupil. Before speaking of the results it may be desirable to give an extract from one of her letters, which shows some of her first impressions of her new life.

'Brussels: 1842 (May ?)

'I was twenty-six years old a week or two since; and at this ripe time of life I am a schoolgirl, and, on the whole,

very happy in that capacity. It felt very strange at first to submit to authority instead of exercising it—to obey orders instead of giving them; but I like that state of things. I returned to it with the same avidity that a cow, that has long been kept on dry hay, returns to fresh grass. Don't laugh at my simile. It is natural to me to submit, and very unnatural to command.

'This is a large school, in which there are about forty *externes*, or day pupils, and twelve *pensionnaires*, or boarders. Madame Héger, the head, is a lady of precisely the same cast of mind, degree of cultivation, and quality of intellect as Miss (Catherine Wooler). I think the severe points are a little softened, because she has not been disappointed, and consequently soured. In a word, she is a married instead of a maiden lady. There are three teachers in the school—Mademoiselle Blanche, Mademoiselle Sophie, and Mademoiselle Marie. The two first have no particular character. One is an old maid, and the other will be one. Mademoiselle Marie is talented and original, but of repulsive and arbitrary manners, which have made the whole school, except myself and Emily, her bitter enemies. No less than seven masters attend, to teach the different branches of education—French, Drawing, Music, Singing, Writing, Arithmetic, and German. All in the house are Catholics except ourselves, one other girl, and the *gouvernante* of Madame's children, an Englishwoman, in rank something between a lady's maid and a nursery governess. The difference in country and religion makes a broad line of demarcation between us and all the rest. We are completely isolated in the midst of numbers. Yet I think I am never unhappy; my present life is so delightful, so congenial to my own nature, compared with that of a governess. My time, constantly occupied, passes too rapidly. Hitherto both Emily and I have had good health, and therefore we have been able to work well. There is one individual of whom I have not yet spoken—M. Héger, the husband of Madame. He is professor of rhetoric, a man of power as to mind, but very choleric and irritable in

temperament.[1] He is very angry with me just at present, because I have written a translation which he chose to stigmatise as "*peu correct.*" He did not tell me so, but wrote the word on the margin of my book, and asked, in brief, stern phrase, how it happened that my compositions were always better than my translations, adding that the thing seemed to him inexplicable. The fact is, some weeks ago, in a high-flown humour, he forbade me to use either dictionary or grammar in translating the most difficult English compositions into French. This makes the task rather arduous, and compels me every now and then to introduce an English word, which nearly plucks the eyes out of his head when he sees it. Emily and he don't draw well together at all. Emily works like a horse, and she has had great difficulties to contend with—far greater than I have had. Indeed, those who come to a French school for instruction ought previously to have acquired a considerable knowledge of the French language, otherwise they will lose a great deal of time, for the course of instruction is adapted to natives and not to foreigners; and in these large establishments they will not change their ordinary course for one or two strangers. The few private lessons that M. Héger has vouchsafed to give us are, I suppose, to be considered a great favour; and I can perceive they have already excited much spite and jealousy in the school.

'You will abuse this letter for being short and dreary, and there are a hundred things which I want to tell you, but I have not time. Brussels is a beautiful city. The Belgians hate the English. Their external morality is more rigid than ours. To lace the stays without a handkerchief on the neck is considered a disgusting piece of indelicacy.'

[1] This letter was to Ellen Nussey. A sentence omitted here runs, 'A little black being, with a face that varies in expression. Sometimes he borrows the lineaments of an insane tom-cat, sometimes those of a delirious hyena; occasionally, but very seldom, he discards these perilous attractions and assumes an air not above one hundred degrees removed from mild and gentleman-like.'

The passage in this letter where M. Héger is represented as prohibiting the use of dictionary or grammar refers, I imagine, to the time I have mentioned, when he determined to adopt a new method of instruction in the French language, of which they were to catch the spirit and rhythm rather from the ear and the heart, as its noblest accents fell upon them, than by over-careful and anxious study of its grammatical rules. It seems to me a daring experiment on the part of their teacher; but doubtless he knew his ground; and that it answered is evident in the composition of some of Charlotte's *devoirs*, written about this time. I am tempted, in illustration of this season of mental culture, to recur to a conversation which I had with M. Héger on the manner in which he formed his pupil's style, and to give a proof of his success, by copying a *devoir* of Charlotte's with his remarks upon it.

He told me that one day this summer (when the Brontës had been for about four months receiving instruction from him) he read to them Victor Hugo's celebrated portrait of Mirabeau, 'mais dans ma leçon je me bornais à ce qui concerne *Mirabeau orateur*. C'est après l'analyse de ce morceau, considéré surtout du point de vue du fond, de la disposition, de ce qu'on pourrait appeler *la charpente*, qu'ont été faits les deux portraits que je vous donne.' He went on to say that he had pointed out to them the fault in Victor Hugo's style as being exaggeration in conception, and, at the same time, he had made them notice the extreme beauty of his 'nuances' of expression. They were then dismissed to choose the subject of a similar kind of portrait. The selection M. Héger always left to them; for 'it is necessary,' he observed, 'before sitting down to write on a subject, to have thoughts and feelings about it. I cannot tell on what subject your heart and mind have been excited. I must leave that to you.' The marginal comments, I need hardly say, are M. Héger's; the words in italics are Charlotte's, for which he substitutes a better form of expression, which is placed between brackets.

IMITATION.

'Le 31 juillet 1842.

'PORTRAIT DE PIERRE L'HERMITE. CHARLOTTE BRONTË

'De temps en temps, il paraît sur la terre des hommes destinés à être les instruments [prédestinés] de grands changements moraux ou politiques. Quelquefois c'est un conquérant, un Alexandre ou un Attila, qui passe comme un ouragan, et purifie l'atmosphère morale, comme l'orage purifie l'atmosphère physique; quelquefois, c'est un révolutionnaire, un Cromwell, ou un Robespierre, qui fait expier par un roi, les vices de toute une dynastie; quelquefois c'est un enthousiaste religieux comme Mahomet, ou Pierre l'Hermite, qui, avec le seul levier de la pensée, soulève des nations entières, les déracine et les transplante dans des climats nouveaux, *peuplant l'Asie avec les habitants de l'Europe*. Pierre l'Hermite était gentilhomme de Picardie, en France, pourquoi donc n'a-t-il passé sa vie comme les autres gentilshommes, ses contemporains, ont passé la leur, à table, à la chasse, dans son lit, sans s'inquiéter de Saladin, ou de ses Sarrasins? N'est-ce pas parce qu'il y a, dans certaines natures, *une ardeur* [un foyer d'activité] indomptable qui ne leur permet pas de rester inactives, *qui les force à se remuer afin d'exercer les facultés puissantes, qui même en dormant sont prêtes, comme Samson, à briser les nœuds qui les retiennent?*

'Pierre prit la profession des armes; *si son ardeur avait été de cette espèce* [s'il n'avait eu que cette ardeur vulgaire] qui provient d'une robuste santé, *il aurait* [c'eût] été un brave militaire, et rien de plus; mais son ardeur était celle de l'âme, sa flamme était pure et elle s'élevait vers le ciel.

'*Sans doute* [Il est vrai que] la jeunesse de

Pourquoi cette suppression?

les fautes et

Ce détail ne convient qu'à Pierre. Inutile, quand vous écrivez en français.

Vous avez commencé à parler de Pierre: vous êtes entrée dans le sujet; marchez au but.

Pierre *était* [fut] troublée par passions orageuses; les natures puissantes sont extrêmes en tout, elles ne connaissent la tiédeur ni dans le bien, ni dans le mal; Pierre donc chercha d'abord avidement la gloire qui se flétrit et les plaisirs qui trompent, mais *il fit bientôt la découverte* [bientôt il s'aperçut] que ce qu'il poursuivait n'était qu'une illusion à laquelle il ne pourrait jamais atteindre; il retourna donc sur ses pas, il recommença le voyage de la vie, mais cette fois il évita le chemin spacieux qui mène à la perdition et il prit le chemin étroit qui mène à la vie; *puisque* [comme] le trajet était long et difficile il jeta la casque et les armes du soldat, et se vêtit de l'habit simple du moine. A la vie militaire succéda la vie monastique, car les extrêmes se touchent, et *chez l'homme sincère* la sincérité du repentir amène [nécessairement à la suite] *avec lui* la rigueur de la pénitence. [Voilà donc Pierre devenu moine!]

Inutile, quand vous avez dit illusion.

'Mais *Pierre* [il] avait en lui un principe qui l'empêchait de rester longtemps inactif, ses idées, sur quel sujet *qu'il soit* [que ce fût], ne pouvaient pas être bornées; il ne lui suffisait pas que lui-même fût religieux, que lui-même fût convaincu de la réalité de Christianismé (sic), il fallait que toute l'Europe, que toute l'Asie, partageât sa conviction et professât la croyance de la Croix. La Piété [fervente] élevée par le Génie, nourrie par la Solitude, *fit naître une espèce d'inspiration* [exalta son âme jusqu'à l'inspiration] *dans son âme*, et lorsqu'il quitta sa cellule et reparut dans le monde, il portait, comme Moïse, l'empreinte de la Divinité sur son front, et *tout* [tous] reconnurent en lui le véritable apôtre de la Croix.

'Mahomet n'avait jamais remué les molles nations de l'Orient comme alors Pierre remua les peuples austères de l'Occident; il fallait que cette

éloquence fût d'une force presque miraculeuse *qui pouvait* [puisqu'elle] persuad*er* [ait] aux rois de vendre leurs royaumes *afin de procurer* [pour avoir] des armes et des soldats *pour aider* [à offrir] à Pierre dans la guerre sainte qu'il voulait livrer aux infidèles. La puissance de Pierre [l'Hermite] n'était nullement une puissance physique, car la nature, ou pour mieux dire, Dieu est impartial dans la distribution de ses dons; il accorde à l'un de ses enfants la grâce, la beauté, les perfections corporelles, à l'autre l'esprit, la grandeur morale. Pierre donc était un homme petit, d'une physionomie peu agréable; mais il avait ce courage, cette constance, cet enthousiasme, cette énergie de sentiment qui écrase toute opposition, et qui fait que la volonté d'un seul homme devienne la loi de toute une nation. Pour se former une juste idée de l'influence qu'exerça cet homme sur les *caractères* [choses] et les idées de son temps, il faut se le représenter au milieu de l'armée des croisés dans son double rôle de prophète et de guerrier; le pauvre hermite, vêtu *du pauvre* [de l'humble] habit gris, est là plus puissant qu'un roi; il est entouré *d'une* [de la] multitude [avide], une multitude qui ne voit que lui, tandis que lui, il ne voit que le ciel; ses yeux levés semblent dire: "Je vois Dieu et les anges, et j'ai perdu de vue la terre!"

'*Dans ce moment le* [Mais ce] pauvre *habit* [froc] gris est pour lui comme le manteau d'Elijah; il l'enveloppe d'inspiration; *il* [Pierre] lit dans l'avenir; il voit Jérusalem délivrée; [il voit] le saint sépulcre libre; il voit le Croissant argent est arraché du Temple, et l'Oriflamme et la Croix rouge sont établies à sa place; non seulement Pierre voit ces merveilles, mais il les fait voir à tous ceux qui l'entourent; il ravive l'espérance et le courage dans [tous ces corps épuisés de fatigues et de privations].

La bataille ne sera livrée que demain, mais la victoire est décidée ce soir. Pierre a promis ; et les Croisés se fient à sa parole, comme les Israëlites se fiaient à celle de Moïse et de Josué.' [1]

As a companion portrait to this Emily chose to depict Harold on the eve of the battle of Hastings. It appears to me that her *devoir* is superior to Charlotte's in power and in

[1] The original manuscript of this *devoir* is still extant. It fills seven pages of very neat writing. There are also a number of Miss Brontë's French exercise books with M. Héger's corrections, one a 'Lettre d'un Pauvre Peintre à un Grand Seigneur,' another an essay on 'William Wallace.' The most curious, perhaps, is a letter in simple German, written obviously for practice during her second sojourn in Brussels. It is clear that Charlotte Brontë was not an enthusiast for the German language and literature after the manner of so many of her contemporaries. There are no indications that she read any German books in the later years when selection was more practicable. Emily, on the other hand, must have become a good German scholar, and undoubtedly read much of Hoffmann and other weird German writers. The reference in the letter to residence with 'a lady who is very good to me' is interesting by the light of Charlotte Brontë's subsequent judgment of Madame Héger :—

'Bruxel 5 Juin.

'Meine liebe Freundinn,—Du hast ohne Zweifel gehört dasz ich nach Belgium wieder gekehrt bin. Es machte mir Schmerz mein Vaterland zu verlassen, aber, wie du wohl weiszt, wenn man nicht reich iszt, kann man nicht immer zu Haus bleiben, man musz in die Welt gehen und trachten mit Arbeitsamkeit und Erwerbsamkeit zu verdienen diese Unabhängigkeit, die das Glück ausgeschlagen hat. Oftmals, wenn man von seinen Aeltern entfernt iszt, hat man viel Kummer und Leiden, weil man nicht die selbe Gunst und das selbe Vergnügen unter Fremden finden kann, wie in der einzigen Familie ; allein ich habe das grosze Glück, bei einer Dame die mir sehr gut iszt, zu wohnen.

'Sonntag und Montag waren zwei Tage Ferien. An Sonntag bin ich spazieren gewesen, mit Fräulein Hauze und drei der Schülerinnen ; wir haben auf dem Lande gespeiszt, und des Abends sind wir durch die grüne Allee nach Haus gegangen. Da sahen wir viele Wagen und eine Menge Herren und Damen, sehr geputz. Montag bin ich nicht ausgegangen, denn ich hatte den Schnupfen bekommen. Heute iszt es wieder Classe, und, weil wir alle unsere Beschäftigungen anfangen mussen, so habe ich nicht viel Zeit dir zu schreiben.

'Ich bin deine Freundinn,

'C. Brontë.'

imagination, and fully equal to it in language; and that this, in both cases, considering how little practical knowledge of French they had when they arrived at Brussels in February, and that they wrote without the aid of dictionary or grammar, is unusual and remarkable. We shall see the progress Charlotte had made, in ease and grace of style, a year later.

In the choice of subjects left to her selection she frequently took characters and scenes from the Old Testament, with which all her writings show that she was especially familiar. The picturesqueness and colour (if I may so express it), the grandeur and breadth of its narrations, impressed her deeply. To use M. Héger's expression, 'elle était nourrie de la Bible.' After he had read De la Vigne's poem on Joan of Arc, she chose the 'Vision and Death of Moses on Mount Nebo' to write about; and, in looking over this *devoir*, I was much struck with one or two of M. Héger's remarks. After describing, in a quiet and simple manner, the circumstances under which Moses took leave of the Israelites, her imagination becomes warmed, and she launches out into a noble strain, depicting the glorious futurity of the Chosen People, as, looking down upon the Promised Land, he sees their prosperity in prophetic vision. But, before reaching the middle of this glowing description, she interrupts herself to discuss for a moment the doubts that have been thrown on the miraculous relations of the Old Testament. M. Héger remarks, 'When you are writing, place your argument first in cool, prosaic language; but when you have thrown the reins on the neck of your imagination, do not pull her up to reason.' Again, in the vision of Moses, he sees the maidens leading forth their flocks to the wells at eventide, and they are described as wearing flowery garlands. Here the writer is reminded of the necessity of preserving a certain verisimilitude: Moses might from his elevation see mountains and plains, groups of maidens and herds of cattle, but could hardly perceive the details of dress, or the ornaments of the head.

When they had made further progress M. Héger took

up a more advanced plan, that of synthetical teaching. He would read to them various accounts of the same person or event, and make them notice the points of agreement and disagreement. Where they were different, he would make them seek the origin of that difference by causing them to examine well into the character and position of each separate writer, and how they would be likely to affect his conception of truth. For instance, take Cromwell. He would read Bossuet's description of him in the 'Oraison Funèbre de la Reine d'Angleterre,' and show how in this he was considered entirely from the religious point of view, as an instrument in the hands of God, pre-ordained to His work. Then he would make them read Guizot, and see how, in this view, Cromwell was endowed with the utmost power of free-will, but governed by no higher motive than that of expediency, while Carlyle regarded him as a character regulated by a strong and conscientious desire to do the will of the Lord. Then he would desire them to remember that the Royalist and Commonwealth men had each their different opinions of the great Protector. And from these conflicting characters he would require them to sift and collect the elements of truth, and try to unite them into a perfect whole.

This kind of exercise delighted Charlotte. It called into play her powers of analysis, which were extraordinary, and she very soon excelled in it.

Wherever the Brontës could be national they were so, with the same tenacity of attachment which made them suffer as they did whenever they left Haworth. They were Protestant to the backbone in other things beside their religion, but pre-eminently so in that. Touched as Charlotte was by the letter of St. Ignatius before alluded to, she claimed equal self-devotion, and from as high a motive, for some of the missionaries of the English Church sent out to toil and to perish on the poisonous African coast, and wrote as an 'imitation' 'Lettre d'un Missionnaire, Sierra-Leone, Afrique.

Something of her feeling, too, appears in the following letter:—

'Brussels: 1842.

'I consider it doubtful whether I shall come home in September or not. Madame Héger has made a proposal for both me and Emily to stay another half-year, offering to dismiss her English master, and take me as English teacher; also to employ Emily some part of each day in teaching music to a certain number of the pupils. For these services we are to be allowed to continue our studies in French and German, and to have board, &c., without paying for it; no salaries, however, are offered. The proposal is kind, and in a great selfish city like Brussels, and a great selfish school, containing nearly ninety pupils (boarders and day pupils included), implies a degree of interest which demands gratitude in return. I am inclined to accept it. What think you? I don't deny I sometimes wish to be in England, or that I have brief attacks of home-sickness; but, on the whole, I have borne a very valiant heart so far; and I have been happy in Brussels, because I have always been fully occupied with the employments that I like. Emily is making rapid progress in French, German, music, and drawing. Monsieur and Madame Héger begin to recognise the valuable parts of her character, under her singularities.

'If the national character of the Belgians is to be measured by the character of most of the girls in this school, it is a character singularly cold, selfish, animal, and inferior. They are very mutinous and difficult for the teachers to manage; and their principles are rotten to the core. We avoid them, which is not difficult to do, as we have the brand of Protestantism and Anglicism upon us. People talk of the danger which Protestants expose themselves to in going to reside in Catholic countries, and thereby running the chance of changing their faith. My advice to all Protestants who are tempted to do anything so besotted as to turn Catholics is, to walk over the sea on to the Continent; to attend Mass sedulously for a time; to note well the mummeries thereof; also the idiotic, mercenary aspect of all the priests; and *then*, if they are still disposed to consider Papistry in any other light than a most

feeble, childish piece of humbug, let them turn Papists at once—that's all. I consider Methodism, Quakerism, and the extremes of High and Low Churchism foolish, but Roman Catholicism beats them all. At the same time, allow me to tell you that there are some Catholics who are as good as any Christians can be to whom the Bible is a sealed book, and much better than many Protestants.' [1]

When the Brontës first went to Brussels, it was with the intention of remaining there for six months, or until the *grandes vacances* began in September. The duties of the school were then suspended for six weeks or two months, and it seemed a desirable period for their return. But the proposal mentioned in the foregoing letter altered their plans. Besides, they were happy in the feeling that they were making progress in all the knowledge they had so long been yearning to acquire. They were happy, too, in possessing friends whose society had been for years congenial to them; and in occasional meetings with these they could have the inexpressible solace to residents in a foreign country—and peculiarly such to the Brontës—of talking over the intelligence received from their respective homes—referring to past, or planning for future days. 'Mary' and her sister, the bright, dancing, laughing Martha, were parlour boarders in an establishment just beyond the barriers of Brussels. Again, the cousins of these friends were resident in the town; and at their house Charlotte and Emily were always welcome, though their overpowering shyness prevented their more valuable qualities from being known, and generally kept them silent. They spent their weekly holiday with this family [2] for many months; but at the end of the time Emily was as impenetrable to friendly advances as at the begining; while Charlotte was too physically weak (as 'Mary' has

[1] This letter was written to Ellen Nussey.

[2] The Dixons. Miss Mary Dixon, a sister of the late Mr. George Dixon, M.P. for Birmingham, is still alive. She is frequently mentioned in Charlotte Brontë's letters.

expressed it) to 'gather up her forces' sufficiently to express any difference or opposition of opinion, and had consequently an assenting and deferential manner, strangely at variance with what they knew of her remarkable talents and decided character. At this house the Taylors and the Brontës could look forward to meeting each other pretty frequently. There was another English family where Charlotte soon became a welcome guest, and where, I suspect, she felt herself more at her ease than either at Mrs. Jenkins's or the friends whom I have first mentioned.

An English physician, with a large family of daughters, went to reside at Brussels, for the sake of their education. He placed them at Madame Héger's school in July 1842, not a month before the beginning of the *grandes vacances* on August 15. In order to make the most of their time, and become accustomed to the language, these English sisters went daily, through the holidays, to the *pensionnat* in the Rue d'Isabelle. Six or eight boarders remained, besides the Miss Brontës. They were there during the whole time, never even having the break to their monotonous life which passing an occasional day with a friend would have afforded them, but devoting themselves with indefatigable diligence to the different studies in which they were engaged. Their position in the school appeared, to these newcomers, analogous to what is often called that of a parlour boarder. They prepared their French, drawing, German, and literature for their various masters; and to these occupations Emily added that of music, in which she was somewhat of a proficient, so much so as to be qualified to give instruction in it to the three younger sisters of my informant.

The school was divided into three classes. In the first were from fifteen to twenty pupils; in the second sixty was about the average number, all foreigners, excepting the two Brontës and one other;[1] in the third there were from twenty

[1] This was not quite the case. Miss Brontë had five Miss Wheelwrights as companions at the Héger *pensionnat*, and a Miss Maria Miller, who was probably the prototype of Ginevra Fanshawe in *Villette*. Dr.

to thirty pupils. The first and second classes occupied a long room, divided by a wooden partition; in each division were four long ranges of desks; and at the end was the *estrade*, or platform, for the presiding instructor. On the last row, in the quietest corner, sat Charlotte and Emily, side by side, so deeply absorbed in their studies as to be insensible to any noise or movement around them. The school hours were from nine to twelve (the luncheon hour), when the boarders and half-boarders—perhaps two-and-thirty girls—went to the *réfectoire* (a room with two long tables, having an oil lamp suspended over each), to partake of bread and fruit; the *externes*, or morning pupils, who had brought their own refreshment with them, adjourning to eat it in the garden. From one to two there was fancy work—a pupil reading aloud some light literature in each room; from two to four, lessons again. At four the *externes* left; and the remaining girls dined in the *réfectoire*, M. and Madame Héger presiding. From five to six there was recreation; from six to seven, preparation for lessons; and after that succeeded the *lecture pieuse*—Charlotte's nightmare. On rare occasions M. Héger himself would come in, and sub-

Wheelwright and his family lived at the Hôtel Clusyenaar, in the Rue Royale. His daughter Lætitia became a firm friend of Charlotte Brontë, and her younger sisters received instructions in music from Emily. Miss Lætitia Wheelwright and three of her sisters are still living. Their names are Lætitia Elizabeth, Emily, Frances, and Sarah Anne. Another sister, Julia, died in Brussels during these school days. The Wheelwrights were Mrs. Gaskell's only guides to Charlotte Brontë's school-life in Brussels, apart from M. Héger. Mrs. Gaskell obtained much of the information contained in her record from Lætitia Wheelwright, to whom she wrote several letters of inquiry, the latest bearing date February 7, 1857, and being written from Plymouth Grove, Manchester. This letter, which is in my possession, is interesting bibliographically. 'I have to-day finished my *Life* of Miss Brontë,' she writes, 'and next week we set out for Rome.' She thanks Miss Wheelwright, while returning her the letters lent, 'not merely for the loan of them, although their value has been great, but for the kind readiness with which you all (especially you and your mother) met my wishes about giving me information.'

stitute a book of a different and more interesting kind. At eight there was a slight meal of water and *pistolets* (the delicious little Brussels rolls), which was immediately followed by prayers, and then to bed.

The principal bedroom was over the long *classe*, or schoolroom. There were six or eight narrow beds on each side of the apartment, every one enveloped in its white draping curtain; a long drawer, beneath each, served for a wardrobe, and between each was a stand for ewer, basin, and looking-glass. The beds of the two Miss Brontës were at the extreme end of the room, almost as private and retired as if they had been in a separate apartment.

During the hours of recreation, which were always spent in the garden, they invariably walked together, and generally kept a profound silence; Emily, though so much the taller, leaning on her sister. Charlotte would always answer when spoken to, taking the lead in replying to any remark addressed to both; Emily rarely spoke to any one. Charlotte's quiet, gentle manner never changed. She was never seen out of temper for a moment; and occasionally, when she herself had assumed the post of English teacher, and the impertinence or inattention of her pupils was most irritating, a slight increase of colour, a momentary sparkling of the eye, and more decided energy of manner, were the only outward tokens she gave of being conscious of the annoyance to which she was subjected. But this dignified endurance of hers subdued her pupils, in the long run, far more than the voluble tirades of the other mistresses. My informant adds, 'The effect of this manner was singular. I can speak from personal experience. I was at that time high-spirited and impetuous, not respecting the French mistresses; yet, to my own astonishment, at one word from her I was perfectly tractable; so much so that, at length, M. and Madame Héger invariably preferred all their wishes to me through her; the other pupils did not, perhaps, love her as I did, she was so quiet and silent; but all respected her.'

With the exception of that part which describes Char-

THE HÉGER 'PENSIONNAT,' RUE D'ISABELLE, BRUSSELS—THE FORBIDDEN ALLEY.

lotte's manner as English teacher—an office which she did not assume for some months later—all this description of the school life of the two Brontës refers to the commencement of the new scholastic year in October 1842; and the extracts I have given convey the first impression which the life at a foreign school, and the position of the two Miss Brontës therein, made upon an intelligent English girl of sixteen. I will make a quotation from 'Mary's' letter referring to this time.

'The first part of her time at Brussels was not uninteresting. She spoke of new people and characters, and foreign ways of the pupils and teachers. She knew the hopes and prospects of the teachers, and mentioned one who was very anxious to marry, "she was getting so old." She used to get her father or brother (I forget which) to be the bearer of letters to different single men, who she thought might be persuaded to do her the favour, saying that her only resource was to become a sister of charity if her present employment failed, and that she hated the idea. Charlotte naturally looked with curiosity to people of her own condition. This woman almost frightened her. "She declares there is nothing she can turn to, and laughs at the idea of delicacy—and she is only ten years older than I am!" I did not see the connection till she said, "Well, Polly, I should hate being a sister of charity; I suppose that would shock some people, but I should." I thought she would have as much feeling as a nurse as most people, and more than some. She said she did not know how people could bear the constant pressure of misery, and never to change except to a new form of it. It would be impossible to keep one's natural feelings. I promised her a better destiny than to go begging any one to marry her, or to lose her natural feelings as a sister of charity. She said, "My youth is leaving me; I can never do better than I have done, and I have done nothing yet." At such times she seemed to think that most human beings were destined by the pressure of worldly interests to lose one faculty and feeling after another

"till they went dead altogether. I hope I shall be put in my grave as soon as I'm dead; I don't want to walk about so." Here we always differed. I thought the degradation of nature she feared was a consequence of poverty, and that she should give her attention to earning money. Sometimes she admitted this, but could find no means of earning money. At others she seemed afraid of letting her thoughts dwell on the subject, saying it brought on the worst palsy of all. Indeed, in her position, nothing less than entire constant absorption in petty money matters could have scraped together a provision.

'Of course artists and authors stood high with Charlotte, and the best thing after their works would have been their company. She used very inconsistently to rail at money and money-getting, and then wish she was able to visit all the large towns in Europe, see all the sights, and know all the celebrities. This was her notion of literary fame—a passport to the society of clever people. . . . When she had become acquainted with the people and ways at Brussels her life became monotonous, and she fell into the same hopeless state as at Miss Wooler's, though in a less degree. I wrote to her, urging her to go home or elsewhere; she had got what she wanted (French), and there was at least novelty in a new place, if no improvement. That if she sank into deeper gloom she would soon not have energy to go, and she was too far from home for her friends to hear of her condition and order her home as they had done from Miss Wooler's. She wrote that I had done her a great service, that she would certainly follow my advice, and was much obliged to me. I have often wondered at this letter. Though she patiently tolerated advice she could always quietly put it aside, and do as she thought fit. More than once afterwards she mentioned the "service" I had done her. She sent me 10*l.* to New Zealand, on hearing some exaggerated accounts of my circumstances, and told me she hoped it would come in seasonably; it was a debt she owed me "for the service I had done her." I

should think 10*l.* was a quarter of her income. The "service" was mentioned as an apology, but kindness was the real motive.'

The first break in this life of regular duties and employments came heavily and sadly. Martha—pretty, winning, mischievous, tricksome Martha—was taken ill suddenly at the Château de Koekelberg. Her sister tended her with devoted love; but it was all in vain; in a few days she died. Charlotte's own short account of this event is as follows:—

'Martha Taylor's illness was unknown to me till the day before she died. I hastened to Koekelberg the next morning—unconscious that she was in great danger—and was told that it was finished. She had died in the night. Mary was taken away to Bruxelles. I have seen Mary frequently since. She is in no ways crushed by the event; but while Martha was ill she was to her more than a mother—more than a sister: watching, nursing, cherishing her so tenderly, so unweariedly. She appears calm and serious now; no bursts of violent emotion; no exaggeration of distress. I have seen Martha's grave—the place where her ashes lie in a foreign country.'[1]

Who that has read 'Shirley' does not remember the few lines—perhaps half a page—of sad recollection?

'He has no idea that little Jessy will die young, she is so gay, and chattering, and arch—original even now; passionate when provoked, but most affectionate if caressed; by turns gentle and rattling; exacting yet generous; fearless . . . yet reliant on any who will help her. Jessy, with her little piquant face, engaging prattle, and winning ways, is made to be a pet. . . .

[1] This letter to Ellen Nussey, dated Haworth, Nov. 10, 1842, concludes, 'Aunt, Martha Taylor, and Mr. Weightman are now all gone; how dreary and void everything seems! Mr. Weightman's illness was exactly what Martha's was; he was ill the same length of time and died in the same manner. Aunt's disease was internal obstruction; she also was ill a fortnight.'

'Do you know this place? No, you never saw it; but you recognise the nature of these trees, this foliage—the cypress, the willow, the yew. Stone crosses like these are not unfamiliar to you, nor are these dim garlands of everlasting flowers. Here is the place: green sod and a grey marble head-stone—Jessy sleeps below. She lived through an April day; much loved was she, much loving. She often, in her brief life, shed tears—she had frequent sorrows; she smiled between, gladdening whatever saw her. Her death was tranquil and happy in Rose's guardian arms, for Rose had been her stay and defence through many trials; the dying and the watching English girls were at that hour alone in a foreign country, and the soil of that country gave Jessy a grave. . . .

'But, Jessy, I will write about you no more. This is an autumn evening, wet and wild. There is only one cloud in the sky; but it curtains it from pole to pole. The wind cannot rest; it hurries sobbing over hills of sullen outline, colourless with twilight and mist. Rain had beat all day on that church tower' (Haworth): 'it rises dark from the stony enclosure of its graveyard: the nettles, the long grass, and the tombs all drip with wet. This evening reminds me too forcibly of another evening some years ago: a howling, rainy autumn evening too—when certain who had that day performed a pilgrimage to a grave new made in a heretic cemetery, sat near a wood fire on the hearth of a foreign dwelling. They were merry and social, but they each knew that a gap, never to be filled, had been made in their circle. They knew they had lost something whose absence could never be quite atoned for, so long as they lived; and they knew that heavy falling rain was soaking into the wet earth which covered their lost darling; and that the sad, sighing gale was mourning above her buried head. The fire warmed them; Life and Friendship yet blessed them: but Jessy lay cold, coffined, solitary—only the sod screening her from the storm.'

This was the first death that had occurred in the small

circle of Charlotte's immediate and intimate friends since the loss of her two sisters long ago. She was still in the midst of her deep sympathy with 'Mary,' when word came from home that her aunt, Miss Branwell, was ailing—was very ill. Emily and Charlotte immediately resolved to go home straight, and hastily packed up for England, doubtful whether they should ever return to Brussels or not, leaving all their relations with M. and Madame Héger, and the *pensionnat*, uprooted, and uncertain of any future existence. Even before their departure, on the morning after they received the first intelligence of illness—when they were on the very point of starting—came a second letter, telling them of their aunt's death. It could not hasten their movements, for every arrangement had been made for speed. They sailed from Antwerp; they travelled night and day, and got home on a Tuesday morning. The funeral and all was over, and Mr. Brontë and Anne were sitting together, in quiet grief for the loss of one who had done her part well in their household for nearly twenty years, and earned the regard and respect of many who never knew how much they would miss her till she was gone. The small property which she had accumulated, by dint of personal frugality and self-denial, was bequeathed to her nieces. Branwell, her darling, was to have had his share; but his reckless expenditure had distressed the good old lady, and his name was omitted in her will.[1]

When the first shock was over the three sisters began to enjoy the full relish of meeting again, after the longest separation they had had in their lives. They had much to tell of the past and much to settle for the future. Anne

[1] The statement about Branwell is scarcely accurate. From the will, which was proved at York, December 28, 1842, we learn that 'my Japan dressing-box I leave to my nephew Branwell Brontë.' That none of Miss Branwell's money was left to her nephew must have been due solely to the aunt's wise recognition that the girls would be more in need of it. The money was divided between some of her female relatives at Penzance and her nieces at Haworth.

had been for some little time in a situation, to which she was to return at the end of the Christmas holidays. For another year or so they were again to be all three apart; and, after that, the happy vision of being together and opening a school was to be realised. Of course they did not now look forward to settling at Burlington, or any other place which would take them away from their father; but the small sum which they each independently possessed would enable them to effect such alterations in the parsonage house at Haworth as would adapt it to the reception of pupils. Anne's plans for the interval were fixed. Emily quickly decided to be the daughter to remain at home. About Charlotte there was much deliberation and some discussion.

Even in all the haste of their sudden departure from Brussels M. Héger had found time to write a letter of sympathy to Mr. Brontë on the loss which he had just sustained; a letter containing such a graceful appreciation of the daughters' characters, under the form of a tribute of respect to their father, that I should have been tempted to copy it, even had there not also been a proposal made in it, respecting Charlotte, which deserves a place in the record of her life.

'*Au Révérend Monsieur Brontë, Pasteur Evangélique, &c. &c.*

'Samedi, 5 o^bre.

'Monsieur,—Un événement bien triste décide mesdemoiselles vos filles à retourner brusquement en Angleterre. Ce départ qui nous afflige beaucoup a cependant ma complète approbation; il est bien naturel qu'elles cherchent à vous consoler de ce que le ciel vient de vous ôter, en se serrant autour de vous, pour mieux vous faire apprécier ce que le ciel vous a donné et ce qu'il vous laisse encore. J'espère que vous me pardonnerez, monsieur, de profiter de cette circonstance pour vous faire parvenir l'expression de mon respect; je n'ai pas l'honneur de vous connaître person-

nellement, et cependant j'éprouve pour votre personne un sentiment de sincère vénération, car en jugeant un père de famille par ses enfants on ne risque pas de se tromper, et sous ce rapport l'éducation et les sentiments que nous avons trouvés dans mesdemoiselles vos filles n'ont pu que nous donner une très haute idée de votre mérite et de votre caractère. Vous apprendrez sans doute avec plaisir que vos enfants ont fait du progrès très remarquable dans toutes les branches de l'enseignement, et que ces progrès sont entièrement dûs à leur amour pour le travail et à leur persévérance ; nous n'avons eu que bien peu à faire avec de pareilles élèves ; leur avancement est votre œuvre bien plus que la nôtre ; nous n'avons pas eu à leur apprendre le prix du temps et de l'instruction, elles avaient appris tout cela dans la maison paternelle, et nous n'avons eu, pour notre part, que le faible mérite de diriger leurs efforts et de fournir un aliment convenable à la louable activité que vos filles ont puisée dans votre exemple et dans vos leçons. Puissent les éloges mérités que nous donnons à vos enfants vous être de quelque consolation dans le malheur qui vous afflige ; c'est là notre espoir en vous écrivant, et ce sera, pour mesdemoiselles Charlotte et Emily, une douce et belle récompense de leurs travaux.

'En perdant nos deux chères élèves, nous ne devons pas vous cacher que nous éprouvons à la fois et du chagrin et de l'inquiétude ; nous sommes affligés parce que cette brusque séparation vient briser l'affection presque paternelle que nous leur avons vouée, et notre peine s'augmente à la vue de tant de travaux interrompus, de tant de choses bien commencées, et qui ne demandent que quelque temps encore pour être menées à bonne fin. Dans un an chacune de vos demoiselles eût été entièrement prémunie contre les éventualités de l'avenir ; chacune d'elles acquérait à la fois et l'instruction et la science d'enseignement ; Mlle Emily allait apprendre le piano ; recevoir des leçons du meilleur professeur que nous ayons en Belgique, et déjà elle avait elle-même de petites élèves ; elle perdait donc à la fois un

reste d'ignorance et un reste plus gênant encore de timidité ; Mlle Charlotte commençait à donner des leçons en français, et d'acquérir cette assurance, cet aplomb si nécessaire dans l'enseignement ; encore un an tout au plus et l'œuvre était achevée et bien achevée. Alors nous aurions pu, si cela vous eût convenu, offrir à mesdemoiselles vos filles ou du moins à l'une des deux une position qui eût été dans ses goûts, et qui lui eût donné cette douce indépendance si difficile à trouver pour une jeune personne. Ce n'est pas, croyez-le bien, monsieur, ce n'est pas ici pour nous une question d'intérêt personnel, c'est une question d'affection ; vous me pardonnerez si nous vous parlons de vos enfants, si nous nous occupons de leur avenir, comme si elles faisaient partie de notre famille ; leurs qualités personnelles, leur bon vouloir, leur zèle extrême sont les seules causes qui nous poussent à nous hasarder de la sorte. Nous savons, monsieur, que vous pèserez plus mûrement et plus sagement que nous la conséquence qu'aurait pour l'avenir une interruption complète dans les études de vos deux filles ; vous déciderez ce qu'il faut faire, et vous nous pardonnerez notre franchise, si vous daignez considérer que le motif qui nous fait agir est une affection bien désintéressée et qui s'affligerait beaucoup de devoir déjà se résigner à n'être plus utile à vos chers enfants.

' Agréez, je vous prie, monsieur, l'expression respectueuse de mes sentiments de haute considération. C. Héger.'

There was so much truth, as well as so much kindness, in this letter—it was so obvious that a second year of instruction would be far more valuable than the first—that there was no long hesitation before it was decided that Charlotte should return to Brussels.

Meanwhile they enjoyed their Christmas all together inexpressibly. Branwell was with them ; that was always a pleasure at this time ; whatever might be his faults, or even his vices, his sisters yet held him up as their family hope, as they trusted that he would some day be their family pride.

They blinded themselves to the magnitude of the failings of which they were now and then told, by persuading themselves that such failings were common to all men of any strength of character; for, till sad experience taught them better, they fell into the usual error of confounding strong passions with strong character.

Charlotte's friend came over to see her, and she returned the visit. Her Brussels life must have seemed like a dream, so completely, in this short space of time, did she fall back into the old household ways; with more of household independence than she could ever have had during her aunt's lifetime. Winter though it was, the sisters took their accustomed walks on the snow-covered moors; or went often down the long road to Keighley, for such books as had been added to the library there during their long absence from England.

CHAPTER XII

Towards the end of January the time came for Charlotte to return to Brussels. Her journey thither was rather disastrous. She had to make her way alone; and the train from Leeds to London, which should have reached Euston Square early in the afternoon, was so much delayed that it did not get in till ten at night. She had intended to seek out the Chapter Coffee-house, where she had stayed before, and which would have been near the place where the steamboats lay; but she appears to have been frightened by the idea of arriving at an hour which, to Yorkshire notions, was so late and unseemly; and taking a cab, therefore, at the station, she drove straight to the London Bridge Wharf, and desired a waterman to row her to the Ostend packet, which was to sail the next morning. She described to me, pretty much as she has since described it in 'Villette,' her sense of loneliness, and yet her strange pleasure in the excitement of the situation, as in the dead of that winter's night she went swiftly over the dark river to the black hull's side, and was at first refused leave to ascend to the deck. 'No passengers might sleep on board,' they said, with some appearance of disrespect. She looked back to the lights and subdued noises of London—that 'Mighty Heart' in which she had no place—and, standing up in the rocking boat, she asked to speak to some one in authority on board the packet. He came, and her quiet, simple statement of her wish, and her reason for it, quelled the feeling of sneering distrust in those who had first heard her request; and impressed the authority so favourably that he allowed her to come on board, and take possession of a berth. The next morning she sailed; and at

seven on Sunday evening she reached the Rue d'Isabelle once more, having only left Haworth on Friday morning at an early hour.

Her salary was 16*l.* a year; out of which she had to pay for her German lessons, for which she was charged as much (the lessons being probably rated by time) as when Emily learnt with her and divided the expense, viz. ten francs a month. By Miss Brontë's own desire she gave her English lessons in the *classe*, or schoolroom, without the supervision of Madame or M. Héger. They offered to be present, with a view to maintain order among the unruly Belgian girls; but she declined this, saying that she would rather enforce discipline by her own manner and character than be indebted for obedience to the presence of a *gendarme*. She ruled over a new schoolroom, which had been built on the space in the playground adjoining the house. Over that First Class she was *surveillante* at all hours; and henceforward she was called *Mademoiselle* Charlotte by M. Héger's orders. She continued her own studies, principally attending to German and to Literature; and every Sunday she went alone to the German and English chapels. Her walks too were solitary, and principally taken in the *allée défendue*, where she was secure from intrusion. This solitude was a perilous luxury to one of her temperament, so liable as she was to morbid and acute mental suffering.

On March 6, 1843, she writes thus:—

'I am settled by this time, of course. I am not too much overloaded with occupation; and besides teaching English I have time to improve myself in German. I ought to consider myself well off, and to be thankful for my good fortunes. I hope I am thankful; and if I could always keep up my spirits and never feel lonely, or long for companionship, or friendship, or whatever they call it, I should do very well. As I told you before, M. and Madame Héger are the only two persons in the house for whom I really experience regard and esteem, and of course I cannot be always with them, nor even very often. They told me, when I first returned,

that I was to consider their sitting-room my sitting-room also, and to go there whenever I was not engaged in the schoolroom. This, however, I cannot do. In the daytime it is a public room, where music masters and mistresses are constantly passing in and out; and in the evening I will not and ought not to intrude on M. and Madame Héger and their children. Thus I am a good deal by myself, out of school hours; but that does not signify. I now regularly give English lessons to M. Héger and his brother-in-law. They get on with wonderful rapidity, especially the first. He already begins to speak English very decently. If you could see and hear the efforts I make to teach them to pronounce like Englishmen, and their unavailing attempts to imitate, you would laugh to all eternity.

'The Carnival is just over, and we have entered upon the gloom and abstinence of Lent. The first day of Lent we had coffee without milk for breakfast; vinegar and vegetables, with a very little salt fish, for dinner; and bread for supper. The Carnival was nothing but masking and mummery. M. Héger took me and one of the pupils into the town to see the masks. It was animating to see the immense crowds, and the general gaiety, but the masks were nothing. I have been twice to the D.s'[1] (those cousins of 'Mary's' of whom I have before made mention). 'When she leaves Bruxelles I shall have nowhere to go to. I have had two letters from Mary. She does not tell me she has been ill, and she does not complain; but her letters are not the letters of a person in the enjoyment of great happiness. She has nobody to be as good to her as M. Héger is to me; to lend her books; to converse with her sometimes, &c.

'Good-bye. When I say so it seems to me that you will hardly hear me; all the waves of the Channel heaving and roaring between must deaden the sound.'[2]

From the tone of this letter it may easily be perceived

[1] The Dixons.

[2] This letter to Ellen Nussey was illustrated by a humorous pen-and-ink sketch of Charlotte Brontë saying 'Good-bye' across the Channel.

that the Brussels of 1843 was a different place from that of 1842. Then she had Emily for a daily and nightly solace and companion. She had the weekly variety of a visit to the family of the D.s; and she had the frequent happiness of seeing 'Mary' and Martha. Now Emily was far away in Haworth—where she or any other loved one might die before Charlotte, with her utmost speed, could reach them, as experience, in her aunt's case, had taught her. The D.s were leaving Brussels; so, henceforth, her weekly holiday would have to be passed in the Rue d'Isabelle, or so she thought. 'Mary' was gone off on her own independent course; Martha alone remained—still and quiet for ever, in the cemetery beyond the Porte de Louvain. The weather, too, for the first few weeks after Charlotte's return, had been piercingly cold; and her feeble constitution was always painfully sensitive to an inclement season. Mere bodily pain, however acute, she could always put aside; but too often ill-health assailed her in a part far more to be dreaded. Her depression of spirits, when she was not well, was pitiful in its extremity. She was aware that it was constitutional, and could reason about it; but no reasoning prevented her suffering mental agony while the bodily cause remained in force.

The Hégers have discovered, since the publication of 'Villette,' that at this beginning of her career as English teacher in their school the conduct of her pupils was often impertinent and mutinous in the highest degree. But of this they were unaware at the time, as she had declined their presence and never made any complaint. Still it must have been a depressing thought to her at this period that her joyous, healthy, obtuse pupils were so little answerable to the powers she could bring to bear upon them; and though, from their own testimony, her patience, firmness, and resolution at length obtained their just reward, yet with one so weak in health and spirits the reaction after such struggles as she frequently had with her pupils must have been very sad and painful.

She thus writes to her friend Ellen:—

'April 1843.

'Is there any talk of your coming to Brussels? During the bitter cold weather we had through February, and the principal part of March, I did not regret that you had not accompanied me. If I had seen you shivering as I shivered myself, if I had seen your hands and feet as red and swelled as mine were, my discomfort would just have been doubled. I can do very well under this sort of thing; it does not fret me; it only makes me numb and silent; but if you were to pass a winter in Belgium you would be ill. However, more genial weather is coming now, and I wish you were here. Yet I never have pressed you, and never would press you too warmly to come. There are privations and humiliations to submit to; there is monotony and uniformity of life; and, above all, there is a constant sense of solitude in the midst of numbers. The Protestant, the foreigner, is a solitary being, whether as teacher or pupil. I do not say this by way of complaining of my own lot; for though I acknowledge that there are certain disadvantages in my present position, what position on earth is without them? And, whenever I turn back to compare what I am with what I was—my place here with my place at Mrs. (Sidgwick's or Mrs. White's)—I am thankful. There was an observation in your last letter which excited, for a moment, my wrath. At first I thought it would be folly to reply to it, and I would let it die. Afterwards I determined to give one answer, once for all. "Three or four people," it seems, "have the idea that the future *époux* of Mademoiselle Brontë is on the Continent." These people are wiser than I am. They could not believe that I crossed the sea merely to return as teacher to Madame Héger's. I must have some more powerful motive than respect for my master and mistress, gratitude for their kindness, &c., to induce me to refuse a salary of 50*l.* in England and accept one of 16*l.* in Belgium. I must, forsooth, have some remote hope of entrapping a husband somehow, or somewhere. If these charitable people knew the total seclusion of the life I lead—that I never exchange

a word with any other man than Monsieur Héger, and seldom indeed with him—they would, perhaps, cease to suppose that any such chimerical and groundless notion had influenced my proceedings. Have I said enough to clear myself of so silly an imputation? Not that it is a crime to marry, or a crime to wish to be married; but it is an imbecility, which I reject with contempt, for women, who have neither fortune nor beauty, to make marriage the principal object of their wishes and hopes, and the aim of all their actions; not to be able to convince themselves that they are unattractive, and that they had better be quiet, and think of other things than wedlock.'

The following is an extract, from one of the few letters which have been preserved, of her correspondence with her sister Emily: [1]—

[1] Here is the actual letter. The original, from *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle*, is in the possession of Mr. A. B. Nicholls:—

'Dear E. J.,—The reason of the unconscionable demand for money is explained in my letter to papa. Would you believe it, Mlle. Mühl demands as much for one pupil as for two, namely, ten francs per month. This, with the five francs per month to the *blanchisseuse*, makes havoc in 16*l.* per annum. You will perceive I have begun again to take German lessons. Things wag on much as usual here. Only Mlle. Blanche and Mlle. Haussé are at present on a system of war without quarter. They hate each other like two cats. Mlle. Blanche frightens Mlle. Haussé by her white passions (for they quarrel venomously). Mlle. Haussé complains that when Mlle. Blanche is in fury "*elle n'a pas de lèvres.*" I find also that Mlle. Sophie dislikes Mlle. Blanche extremely. She says she is heartless, insincere, and vindictive, which epithets, I assure you, are richly deserved. Also I find she is the regular spy of Mme. Héger, to whom she reports everything. Also she invents—which I should not have thought. I have now the entire charge of the English lessons. I have given two lessons to the first class. Hortense Jannoy was a picture on these occasions; her face was black as a "blue-piled thunder-loft," and her two ears were red as raw beef. To all questions asked her reply was, "*Je ne sais pas.*" It is a pity but her friends could meet with a person qualified to cast out a devil. I am richly off for companionship in these parts. Of late days M. and Mme. Héger rarely speak to me, and I really don't pretend to care a fig for anybody else in

'May 29, 1843.

'I get on here from day to day in a Robinson-Crusoe-like sort of way, very lonely, but that does not signify. In other respects I have nothing substantial to complain of, nor is this a cause for complaint. I hope you are well. Walk out often on the moors. My love to Tabby. I hope she keeps well.'

And about this time she wrote to her father—

'June 2, 1843.

'I was very glad to hear from home. I had begun to get low-spirited at not receiving any news, and to entertain indefinite fears that something was wrong. You do not say anything about your own health, but I hope you are well, and Emily also. I am afraid she will have a good deal of hard work to do now that Hannah' (a servant girl who had been assisting Tabby) 'is gone. I am exceedingly glad to hear that you still keep Tabby' (considerably upwards of

the establishment. You are not to suppose by that expression that I am under the influence of *warm* affection for Mme. Héger. I am convinced that she does not like me—why I can't tell, nor do I think she herself has any definite reason for the aversion; but, for one thing, she cannot comprehend why I do not make intimate friends of Mesdames Blanche, Sophie, and Haussé. M. Héger is wondrously influenced by Madame, and I should not wonder if he disapproves very much of my unamiable want of sociability. He has already given me a brief lecture on universal *bienveillance*, and, perceiving that I don't improve in consequence, I fancy he has taken to considering me as a person to be let alone, left to the error of her ways; and consequently he has in a great measure withdrawn the light of his countenance, and I get on from day to day in a Robinson-Crusoe-like condition—very lonely. That does not signify. In other respects I have nothing substantial to complain of, nor is even this a cause for complaint. Except the loss of M. Héger's goodwill (if I have lost it) I care for none of 'em. I hope you are well and hearty. Walk out often on the moors. Sorry am I to hear that Hannah is gone, and that she has left you burdened with the charge of the little girl, her sister. I hope Tabby will continue to stay with you—give my love to her. Regards to the fighting gentry, and to old asthma.—Your

'C. B.'

seventy). 'It is an act of great charity to her, and I do not think it will be unrewarded, for she is very faithful, and will always serve you, when she has occasion, to the best of her abilities; besides, she will be company for Emily, who, without her, would be very lonely.'

I gave a *devoir*, written after she had been four months under M. Héger's tuition. I will now copy out another, written nearly a year later, during which the progress made appears to me very great.

'31 mai 1843.

'Sur la Mort de Napoléon.

'Napoléon naquit en Corse et mourut à Sainte-Hélène. Entre ces deux îles rien qu'un vaste et brûlant désert et l'océan immense. Il naquit fils d'un simple gentilhomme, et mourut empereur, mais sans couronne et dans les fers. Entre son berceau et sa tombe qu'y a-t-il? la carrière d'un soldat parvenu, des champs de bataille, une mer de sang, un trône, puis du sang encore, et des fers. Sa vie, c'est l'arc-en-ciel; les deux points extrêmes touchent la terre, le comble lumineux mesure les cieux. Sur Napoléon au berceau une mère brillait; dans la maison paternelle il avait des frères et des sœurs; plus tard dans son palais il eut une femme qui l'aimait. Mais sur son lit de mort Napoléon est seul; plus de mère, ni de frère, ni de sœur, ni de femme, ni d'enfant!! D'autres ont dit et rediront ses exploits, moi, je m'arrête à contempler l'abandonnement de sa dernière heure.

'Il est là, exilé et captif, enchaîné sur un écueil. Nouveau Prométhée, il subit le châtiment de son orgueil! Prométhée avait voulu être Dieu et Créateur; il déroba le feu du Ciel pour animer le corps qu'il avait formé. Et lui, Buonaparte, il a voulu créer, non pas un homme, mais un empire, et pour donner une existence, une âme, à son œuvre gigantesque il n'a pas hésité à arracher la vie à des nations entières. Jupiter indigné de l'impiété de Prométhée, le riva vivant à la cime du Caucase. Ainsi, pour punir l'ambition rapace de Buonaparte, la Providence l'a enchaîné, jusqu'à ce que la mort s'en

suivit, sur un roc isolé de l'Atlantique. Peut-être là aussi a-t-il senti lui fouillant le flanc cet insatiable vautour dont parle la fable, peut-être a-t-il souffert aussi cette soif du cœur, cette faim de l'âme, qui torturent l'exilé, loin de sa famille et de sa patrie. Mais parler ainsi n'est-ce pas attribuer gratuitement à Napoléon une humaine faiblesse qu'il n'éprouva jamais? Quand donc s'est-il laissé enchaîner par un lien d'affection? Sans doute d'autres conquérants ont hésité dans leur carrière de gloire, arrêtés par un obstacle d'amour ou d'amitié, retenus par la main d'une femme, rappelés par la voix d'un ami—lui, jamais! Il n'eut pas besoin, comme Ulysse, de se lier au mât du navire, ni de se boucher les oreilles avec de la cire; il ne redoutait pas le chant des Sirènes—il le dédaignait; il se fit marbre et fer pour exécuter ses grands projets. Napoléon ne se regardait pas comme un homme, mais comme l'incarnation d'un peuple. Il n'aimait pas; il ne considérait ses amis et ses proches que comme des instruments auxquels il tint, tant qu'ils furent utiles, et qu'il jeta côté quand ils cessèrent de l'être. Qu'on ne se permette donc pas d'approcher du sépulcre du Corse avec sentiments de pitié, ou de souiller de larmes la pierre qui couvre ses restes, son âme répudierait tout cela. On a dit, je le sais, qu'elle fut cruelle la main qui le sépara de sa femme et de son enfant. Non, c'était une main qui, comme la sienne, ne tremblait ni de passion ni de crainte, c'était la main d'un homme froid, convaincu, qui avait su deviner Buonaparte; et voici ce que disait cet homme que la défaite n'a pu humilier, ni la victoire enorgueillir. "Marie-Louise n'est pas la femme de Napoléon; c'est la France que Napoléon a épousée; c'est la France qu'il aime, leur union enfante la perte de l'Europe; voilà le divorce que je veux-voilà l'union qu'il faut briser."

'La voix des timides et des traîtres protesta contre cette sentence. "C'est abuser de droit de la victoire! C'est fouler aux pieds le vaincu! Que l'Angleterre se montre clémente, qu'elle ouvre ses bras pour recevoir comme hôte son ennemi désarmé." L'Angleterre aurait peut-être écouté

ce conseil, car partout et toujours il y a des âmes faibles et timorées bientôt séduites par la flatterie ou effrayées par le reproche. Mais la Providence permit qu'un homme se trouvât qui n'a jamais su ce que c'est que la crainte ; qui aima sa patrie mieux que sa renommée ; impénétrable devant les menaces, inaccessible aux louanges, il se présenta devant le conseil de la nation, et levant son front tranquille en haut, il osa dire : " Que la trahison se taise ! car c'est trahir que de conseiller de temporiser avec Buonaparte. Moi je sais ce que sont ces guerres dont l'Europe saigne encore, comme une victime sous le couteau du boucher. Il faut en finir avec Napoléon Buonaparte. Vous vous effrayez à tort d'un mot si dur ! Je n'ai pas de magnanimité, dit-on ? Soit ! que m'importe ce qu'on dit de moi ? Je n'ai pas ici à me faire une réputation de héros magnanime, mais à guérir, si la cure est possible, l'Europe qui se meurt, épuisée de ressources et de sang, l'Europe dont vous négligez les vrais intérêts, préoccupés que vous êtes d'une vaine renommée de clémence. Vous êtes faibles ! Eh bien ! je viens vous aider. Envoyez Buonaparte à Sainte-Hélène ! n'hésitez pas, ne cherchez pas un autre endroit ; c'est le seul convenable. Je vous le dis, j'ai réfléchi pour vous ; c'est là qu'il doit être, et non pas ailleurs. Quant à Napoléon, homme, soldat, je n'ai rien contre lui ; c'est un lion royal, auprès de qui vous n'êtes que des chacals. Mais Napoléon empereur, c'est autre chose, je l'extirperai du sol de l'Europe." Et celui qui parla ainsi toujours sut garder sa promesse, celle-là comme toutes les autres. Je l'ai dit, et je le répète, cet homme est l'égal de Napoléon par le génie ; comme trempe de caractère, comme droiture, comme élévation de pensée et de but, il est d'une tout autre espèce. Napoléon Buonaparte était avide de renommée et de gloire : Arthur Wellesley ne se soucie ni de l'une ni de l'autre ; l'opinion publique, la popularité, étaient choses de grand valeur aux yeux de Napoléon ; pour Wellington l'opinion publique est une rumeur, un rien que le souffle de son inflexible volonté fait disparaître comme une bulle de savon. Napoléon flattait le peuple ; Wellington le

brusque ; l'un cherchait les applaudissements, l'autre ne se soucie que du témoignage de sa conscience ; quand elle approuve, c'est assez ; tout autre louange l'obsède. Aussi ce peuple, qui adorait Buonaparte, s'irritait, s'insurgeait contre la morgue de Wellington ; parfois il lui témoigna sa colère et sa haine par des grognements, par des hurlements de bêtes fauves ; et alors, avec une impassibilité de sénateur romain, le moderne Coriolan toisait du regard l'émeute furieuse ; il croisait ses bras nerveux sur sa large poitrine, et seul, debout sur son seuil, il attendait, il bravait cette tempête populaire dont les flots venaient mourir à quelques pas de lui : et quand la foule, honteuse de sa rebellion, venait lécher les pieds du maître, le hautain patricien méprisait l'hommage d'aujourd'hui comme la haine d'hier, et dans les rues de Londres, et devant son palais ducal d'Apsley, il repoussait d'un genre plein de froid dédain l'incommode empressement du peuple enthousiaste. Cette fierté néanmoins n'excluait pas en lui une rare modestie ; partout il se soustrait à l'éloge ; se dérobe au panégyrique ; jamais il ne parle de ses exploits, et jamais il ne souffre qu'un autre lui en parle en sa présence. Son caractère égale en grandeur et surpasse en vérité celui de tout autre héros ancien ou moderne. La gloire de Napoléon crût en une nuit, comme la vigne de Jonas, et il suffit d'un jour pour la flétrir ; la gloire de Wellington est comme les vieux chênes qui ombragent le château de ses pères sur les rives du Shannon ; le chêne croît lentement ; il lui faut du temps pour pousser vers le ciel ses branches noueuses, et pour enfoncer dans le sol ces racines profondes qui s'enchevêtrent dans les fondements solides de la terre ; mais alors, l'arbre séculaire, inébranlable comme le roc où il a sa base, brave et la faux du temps et l'effort des vents et des tempêtes. Il faudra peut-être un siècle à l'Angleterre pour qu'elle connaisse la valeur de son héros. Dans un siècle l'Europe entière saura combien Wellington a des droits à sa reconnaissance.'

How often in writing this paper 'in a strange land' must

Miss Brontë have thought of the old childish disputes in the kitchen of Haworth Parsonage touching the respective merits of Wellington and Buonaparte! Although the title given to her *devoir* is 'On the Death of Napoleon,' she seems yet to have considered it a point of honour rather to sing praises to an English hero than to dwell on the character of a foreigner placed as she was among those who cared little either for England or for Wellington. She now felt that she had made great progress towards obtaining proficiency in the French language, which had been her main object in coming to Brussels. But to the zealous learner 'Alps on Alps arise.' No sooner is one difficulty surmounted than some other desirable attainment appears, and must be laboured after. A knowledge of German now became her object; and she resolved to compel herself to remain in Brussels till that was gained. The strong yearning to go home came upon her; the stronger self-denying will forbade. There was a great internal struggle; every fibre of her heart quivered in the strain to master her will; and, when she conquered herself, she remained, not like a victor calm and supreme on the throne, but like a panting, torn, and suffering victim. Her nerves and her spirits gave way. Her health became much shaken.

'Brussels: August 1, 1843.

'If I complain in this letter, have mercy and don't blame me, for, I forewarn you, I am in low spirits, and that earth and heaven are dreary and empty to me at this moment. In a few days our vacation will begin; everybody is joyous and animated at the prospect, because everybody is to go home. I know that I am to stay here during the five weeks that the holidays last, and that I shall be much alone during that time, and consequently get downcast, and find both days and nights of a weary length. It is the first time in my life that I have really dreaded the vacation. Alas! I can hardly write, I have such a dreary weight at my heart; and I do so wish to go home. Is not this childish? Pardon me, for I cannot help it. However, though I am not strong enough to bear up cheerfully, I can still bear up; and I will continue to stay

(D.V.) some months longer, till I have acquired German; and then I hope to see all your faces again. Would that the vacation were well over! it will pass so slowly. Do have the Christian charity to write me a long, long letter; fill it with the minutest details; nothing will be uninteresting. Do not think it is because people are unkind to me that I wish to leave Belgium; nothing of the sort. Everybody is abundantly civil, but home-sickness keeps creeping over me. I cannot shake it off. Believe me, very merrily, vivaciously, gaily yours, C. B.'

The *grandes vacances* began soon after the date of this letter, when she was left in the great deserted *pensionnat*, with only one teacher for a companion. This teacher, a Frenchwoman, had always been uncongenial to her; but, left to each other's sole companionship, Charlotte soon discovered that her associate was more profligate, more steeped in a kind of cold, systematic sensuality, than she had before imagined it possible for a human being to be; and her whole nature revolted from this woman's society. A low nervous fever was gaining upon Miss Brontë. She had never been a good sleeper, but now she could not sleep at all. Whatever had been disagreeable, or obnoxious, to her during the day was presented when it was over with exaggerated vividness to her disordered fancy. There were causes for distress and anxiety in the news from home, particularly as regarded Branwell. In the dead of the night, lying awake at the end of the long, deserted dormitory, in the vast and silent house, every fear respecting those whom she loved, and who were so far off in another country, became a terrible reality, oppressing her and choking up the very life blood in her heart. Those nights were times of sick, dreary, wakeful misery; precursors of many such in after years.[1]

[1] An interesting letter to Emily, printed in *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle*, was written at this time. It gives the actual facts of a famous incident in *Villette*:—

'Bruxelles: September 2, 1843.

'Dear E. J.,—Another opportunity of writing to you coming to pass,

I shall improve it by scribbling a few lines. More than half the holidays are now past, and rather better than I expected. The weather has been exceedingly fine during the last fortnight, and yet not so Asiatically hot as it was last year at this time. Consequently I have tramped about a great deal and tried to get a clearer acquaintance with the streets of Bruxelles. This week, as no teacher is here except Mlle. Blanche, who is returned from Paris, I am always alone except at meal times, for Mlle. Blanche's character is so false and so contemptible I can't force myself to associate with her. She perceives my utter dislike and never now speaks to me—a great relief.

'However, I should inevitably fall into the gulf of low spirits if I stayed always by myself here without a human being to speak to, so I go out and traverse the Boulevards and streets of Bruxelles sometimes for hours together. Yesterday I went on a pilgrimage to the cemetery, and far beyond it on to a hill where there was nothing but fields as far as the horizon. When I came back it was evening; but I had such a repugnance to return to the house, which contained nothing that I cared for, I still kept threading the streets in the neighbourhood of the Rue d'Isabelle and avoiding it. I found myself opposite to Ste. Gudule, and the bell, whose voice you know, began to toll for evening *salut*. I went in, quite alone (which procedure you will say is not much like me), wandered about the aisles, where a few old women were saying their prayers, till vespers began. I stayed till they were over. Still I could not leave the church or force myself to go home—to school I mean. An odd whim came into my head. In a solitary part of the Cathedral six or seven people still remained kneeling by the confessionals. In two confessionals I saw a priest. I felt as if I did not care what I did, provided it was not absolutely wrong, and that it served to vary my life and yield a moment's interest. I took a fancy to change myself into a Catholic and go and make a real confession, to see what it was like. Knowing me as you do, you will think this odd, but when people are by themselves they have singular fancies. A penitent was occupied in confessing. They do not go into the sort of pew or cloister which the priest occupies, but kneel down on the steps and confess through a grating. Both the confessor and the penitent whisper very low, you can hardly hear their voices. After I had watched two or three penitents go and return I approached at last and knelt down in a niche which was just vacated. I had to kneel there ten minutes waiting, for on the other side was another penitent, invisible to me. At last that went away and a little wooden door inside the grating opened, and I saw the priest leaning his ear towards me. I was obliged to begin, and yet I did not know a word of the formula with which they always commence their confessions. It was a funny position. I felt precisely as I did when alone on the

In the daytime, driven abroad by loathing of her companion and by the weak restlessness of fever, she tried to walk herself into such a state of bodily fatigue as would induce sleep. So she went out, and with weary steps would traverse the Boulevards and the streets, sometimes for hours together; faltering and resting occasionally on some of the many benches placed for the repose of happy groups, or for solitary wanderers like herself. Then up again—anywhere but to the *pensionnat*—out to the cemetery where Martha lay—out beyond it, to the hills whence there is nothing to be seen but fields as far as the horizon. The shades of evening made her retrace her footsteps—sick for want of food, but not hungry; fatigued with long-continued exercise—yet restless still, and doomed to another weary, haunted night of sleeplessness. She would thread the streets in the neighbourhood of the Rue d'Isabelle, and yet avoid it and its occupant, till as late an hour as she dared be out. At last she was compelled to keep her bed for some days, and this compulsory rest did her good. She was weak, but less depressed in spirits than she had been, when the school reopened, and her positive practical duties recommenced.

Thames at midnight. I commenced with saying I was a foreigner and had been brought up as a Protestant. The priest asked if I was a Protestant then. I somehow could not tell a lie and said "Yes." He replied that in that case I could not "*jouir du bonheur de la confesse*;" but I was determined to confess, and at last he said he would allow me, because it might be the first step towards returning to the true Church. I actually did confess—a real confession. When I had done he told me his address, and said that every morning I was to go to the Rue du Parc—to his house—and he would reason with me and try to convince me of the error and enormity of being a Protestant ! ! ! I promised faithfully to go. Of course, however, the adventure stops there, and I hope I shall never see the priest again. I think you had better not tell papa of this. He will not understand that it was only a freak, and will perhaps think I am going to turn Catholic. Trusting that you and papa are well, and also Tabby and the Holyes, and hoping you will write to me immediately, I am yours,

'C. B.'

She writes thus on October 13, 1843 : [1]—

'Mary (Taylor) is getting on well, as she deserves to do. I often hear from her. Her letters and yours are one of my few pleasures. She urges me very much to leave Brussels and go to her ; but at present, however tempted to take such a step, I should not feel justified in doing so. To leave a certainty for a complete uncertainty would be to the last degree imprudent. Notwithstanding that Brussels is indeed desolate to me now. Since the D(ixon)s left I have had no friend. I had, indeed, some very kind acquaintances in the family of a Dr. (Wheelwright), but they, too, are gone now. They left in the latter part of August, and I am completely alone. I cannot count the Belgians anything. It is a curious position to be so utterly solitary in the midst of numbers. Sometimes the solitude oppresses me to an excess. One day, lately, I felt as if I could bear it no longer, and I went to Madame Héger and gave her notice. If it had depended on her I should certainly have soon been at liberty ; but M. Héger, having heard of what was in agitation, sent for me the day after, and pronounced with vehemence his decision, that I should not leave. I could not, at that time, have persevered in my intention without exciting him to anger ; so I promised to stay a little while longer. How long that will be I do not know. I should not like to return to England to do nothing. I am too old for that now ; but if I could hear of a favourable opportunity for commencing a school, I think I should embrace it. We have as yet no fires here, and I suffer much from cold ; otherwise I am well in health. Mr. —— [2] will take this letter to England. He is a pretty-looking and pretty-behaved young man, apparently constructed without a backbone ; by which I don't allude to his corporal spine, which is all right enough, but to his character.

'I get on here after a fashion ; but now that Mary D(ixon) has left Brussels I have nobody to speak to, for I count the

[1] To Ellen Nussey.

[2] The late Mr. George Dixon, afterwards M.P. for Birmingham.

Belgians as nothing. Sometimes I ask myself, How long shall I stay here? but as yet I have only asked the question; I have not answered it. However, when I have acquired as much German as I think fit I think I shall pack up bag and baggage, and depart. Twinges of home-sickness cut me to the heart, every now and then. To-day the weather is glaring, and I am stupefied with a bad cold and headache. I have nothing to tell you. One day is like another in this place. I know you, living in the country, can hardly believe it is possible life can be monotonous in the centre of a brilliant capital like Brussels; but so it is. I feel it most on holidays, when all the girls and teachers go out to visit, and it sometimes happens that I am left, during several hours, quite alone, with four great desolate schoolrooms at my disposition. I try to read, I try to write; but in vain. I then wander about from room to room, but the silence and loneliness of all the house weighs down one's spirits like lead. You will hardly believe that Madame Héger (good and kind as I have described her[1]) never comes near me on these occasions. I own I was astonished the first time I was left alone thus; when everybody else was enjoying the pleasures of a fête day with their friends, and she knew I was quite by myself, and never took the least notice of me. Yet, I understand, she praises me very much to everybody, and says what excellent lessons I give. She is not colder to me than she is to the other teachers; but they are less dependent on her than I am. They have relations and acquaintances in Bruxelles. You remember the letter she wrote me, when I was in England? How kind and affectionate that was! is it not odd? In the meantime the complaints I make at present are a sort of relief which I permit myself. In all other respects I am well satisfied with my position, and you may say so to people who inquire after me (if any one does). Write to me, dear, whenever you can. You do a good deed

[1] This, it is hardly necessary to say, is ironical. In a previous letter to the same correspondent she says, 'Madame Héger is a politic, plausible, and interested person. I no longer trust her.'

when you send me a letter, for you comfort a very desolate heart.'

One of the reasons for the silent estrangement between Madame Héger and Miss Brontë, in the second year of her residence at Brussels, is to be found in the fact that the English Protestant's dislike of Romanism increased with her knowledge of it, and its effects upon those who professed it; and when occasion called for an expression of opinion from Charlotte Brontë she was uncompromising truth. Madame Héger, on the opposite side, was not merely a Roman Catholic, she was *dévote*. Not of a warm or impulsive temperament, she was naturally governed by her conscience, rather than by her affections; and her conscience was in the hands of her religious guides. She considered any slight thrown upon her Church as blasphemy against the Holy Truth; and, though she was not given to open expression of her thoughts and feelings, yet her increasing coolness of behaviour showed how much her most cherished opinions had been wounded. Thus, although there was never any explanation of Madame Héger's change of manner, this may be given as one great reason why, about this time, Charlotte was made painfully conscious of a silent estrangement between them; an estrangement of which, perhaps, the former was hardly aware. I have before alluded to intelligence from home, calculated to distress Charlotte exceedingly with fears respecting Branwell, which I shall speak of more at large when the realisation of her worst apprehensions came to affect the daily life of herself and her sisters. I allude to the subject again here, in order that the reader may remember the gnawing private cares which she had to bury in her own heart; and the pain of which could only be smothered for a time under the diligent fulfilment of present duty. Another dim sorrow was faintly perceived at this time. Her father's eyesight began to fail; it was not unlikely that he might shortly become blind; more of his duty must devolve on a curate, and Mr. Brontë, always liberal

would have to pay at a higher rate than he had heretofore done for this assistance.

She wrote thus to Emily :—

'Dec. 1, 1843.

'This is Sunday morning. They are at their idolatrous "messe," and I am here—that is, in the *réfectoire*. I should like uncommonly to be in the dining-room at home, or in the kitchen, or in the back kitchen. I should like even to be cutting up the hash, with the clerk and some register people at the other table, and you standing by, watching that I put enough flour, and not too much pepper, and, above all, that I save the best pieces of the leg of mutton for Tiger and Keeper, the first of which personages would be jumping about the dish and carving-knife, and the latter standing like a devouring flame on the kitchen floor. To complete the picture, Tabby blowing the fire, in order to boil the potatoes to a sort of vegetable glue! How divine are these recollections to me at this moment! Yet I have no thought of coming home just now. I lack a real pretext for doing so; it is true this place is dismal to me, but I cannot go home without a fixed prospect when I get there; and this prospect must not be a situation; that would be jumping out of the frying-pan into the fire. *You* call yourself idle! absurd, absurd! . . . Is papa well? Are you well? and Tabby? You ask about Queen Victoria's visit to Brussels. I saw her for an instant flashing through the Rue Royale in a carriage and six, surrounded by soldiers. She was laughing and talking very gaily. She looked a little stout, vivacious lady, very plainly dressed, not much dignity or pretension about her. The Belgians liked her very well on the whole. They said she enlivened the sombre Court of King Leopold, which is usually as gloomy as a conventicle. Write to me again soon. Tell me whether papa really wants me very much to come home, and whether you do likewise. I have an idea that I should be of no use there—a sort of aged person upon the parish. I pray, with heart and soul, that all may continue well at Haworth; above all in our grey,

half-inhabited house. God bless the walls thereof! Safety, health, happiness, and prosperity to you, papa, and Tabby. Amen. C. B.'

Towards the end of this year (1843) various reasons conspired with the causes of anxiety which have been mentioned to make her feel that her presence was absolutely and imperatively required at home, while she had acquired all that she proposed to herself in coming to Brussels the second time; and was, moreover, no longer regarded with the former kindliness of feeling by Madame Héger. In consequence of this state of things, working down with sharp edge into a sensitive mind, she suddenly announced to that lady her immediate intention of returning to England. Both M. and Madame Héger agreed that it would be for the best, when they learnt only that part of the case which she could reveal to them—namely, Mr. Brontë's increasing blindness. But as the inevitable moment of separation from people and places, among which she had spent so many happy hours, drew near, her spirits gave way; she had the natural presentiment that she saw them all for the last time, and she received but a dead kind of comfort from being reminded by her friends that Brussels and Haworth were not so very far apart; that access from one place to the other was not so difficult or impracticable as her tears would seem to predicate; nay, there was some talk of one of Madame Héger's daughters being sent to her as a pupil, if she fulfilled her intention of trying to begin a school. To facilitate her success in this plan, should she ever engage in it, M. Héger gave her a kind of diploma, dated from and sealed with the seal of the Athénée Royal de Bruxelles, certifying that she was perfectly capable of teaching the French language, having well studied the grammar and composition thereof, and, moreover, having prepared herself for teaching by studying and practising the best methods of instruction. This certificate is dated December 29, 1843, and on January 2, 1844, she arrived at Haworth.

On the 23rd of the month she writes as follows : [1]—

'Every one asks me what I am going to do, now that I am returned home; and every one seems to expect that I should immediately commence a school. In truth, it is what I should wish to do. I desire it above all things. I have sufficient money for the undertaking, and I hope now sufficient qualifications to give me a fair chance of success; yet I cannot yet permit myself to enter upon life—to touch the object which seems now within my reach, and which I have been so long straining to attain. You will ask me why. It is on papa's account; he is now, as you know, getting old, and it grieves me to tell you that he is losing his sight. I have felt for some months that I ought not to be away from him; and I feel now that it would be too selfish to leave him (at least as long as Branwell and Anne are absent), in order to pursue selfish interests of my own. With the help of God I will try to deny myself in this matter, and to wait.

'I suffered much before I left Brussels. I think, however long I live, I shall not forget what the parting with M. Héger cost me; it grieved me so much to grieve him, who has been so true, kind, and disinterested a friend.[2] At parting he gave me a kind of diploma certifying my abilities as a teacher, sealed with the seal of the Athénée Royal, of which he is professor. I was surprised also at the degree of regret expressed by my Belgian pupils, when they knew I was going to leave. I did not think it had been in their phlegmatic nature. . . . I do not know whether you feel as I do,

[1] To Ellen Nussey.

[2] M. and Mme. Héger celebrated their golden wedding in 1888, but Mme. Héger died the next year. M. Constantin Héger lived to be eighty-seven years of age, dying at 72 Rue Nettoyer, Brussels, on May 6, 1896. He was born in Brussels in 1809, took part in the Belgian revolution of 1830, and fought in the war of independence against the Dutch. He was twice married, and it was his second wife who was associated with Charlotte Brontë. She started the school in the Rue d'Isabelle, and M. Héger took charge of the upper French classes. The Pensionnat Héger was removed in 1894 to the Avenue Louise. I had an interview with Mlle. Héger in 1895. Her father, however, was too ill to see me.

but there are times now when it appears to me as if all my ideas and feelings, except a few friendships and affections, are changed from what they used to be; something in me, which used to be enthusiasm, is tamed down and broken. I have fewer illusions; what I wish for now is active exertion—a stake in life. Haworth seems such a lonely, quiet spot, buried away from the world. I no longer regard myself as young—indeed, I shall soon be twenty-eight; and it seems as if I ought to be working and braving the rough realities of the world, as other people do. It is, however, my duty to restrain this feeling at present, and I will endeavour to do so.'

Of course her absent sister and brother obtained a holiday to welcome her return home, and in a few weeks she was spared to pay a visit to her friend at B(irstall). But she was far from well or strong, and the short journey of fourteen miles seems to have fatigued her greatly.

Soon after she came back to Haworth, in a letter to one of the household in which she had been staying, there occurs this passage: 'Our poor little cat has been ill two days, and is just dead. It is piteous to see even an animal lying lifeless. Emily is sorry.' These few words relate to points in the characters of the two sisters which I must dwell upon a little. Charlotte was more than commonly tender in her treatment of all dumb creatures, and they, with that fine instinct so often noticed, were invariably attracted towards her. The deep and exaggerated consciousness of her personal defects—the constitutional absence of hope, which made her slow to trust in human affection, and, consequently, slow to respond to any manifestation of it—made her manner shy and constrained to men and women, and even to children. We have seen something of this trembling distrust of her own capability of inspiring affection in the grateful surprise she expresses at the regret felt by her Belgian pupils at her departure. But not merely were her actions kind, her words and tones were ever gentle and

caressing, towards animals: and she quickly noticed the least want of care or tenderness on the part of others towards any poor brute creature. The readers of 'Shirley' may remember that it is one of the tests which the heroine applies to her lover:—

'Do you know what soothsayers I would consult?' . . . 'The little Irish beggar that comes barefoot to my door; the mouse that steals out of the cranny in my wainscot; the bird in frost and snow that pecks at my window for a crumb; the dog that licks my hand and sits beside my knee. . . . I know somebody to whose knee the black cat loves to climb, against whose shoulder and cheek it likes to purr. The old dog always comes out of his kennel and wags his tail, and whines affectionately when somebody passes.' [For 'somebody' and 'he,' read 'Charlotte Brontë' and 'she.'] 'He quietly strokes the cat, and lets her sit while he conveniently can; and when he must disturb her by rising he puts her softly down, and never flings her from him roughly: he always whistles to the dog, and gives him a caress.'

The feeling, which in Charlotte partook of something of the nature of an affection, was, with Emily, more of a passion. Some one speaking of her to me, in a careless kind of strength of expression, said, 'She never showed regard to any human creature; all her love was reserved for animals.' The helplessness of an animal was its passport to Charlotte's heart; the fierce, wild intractability of its nature was what often recommended it to Emily. Speaking of her dead sister, the former told me that from her many traits in Shirley's character were taken: her way of sitting on the rug reading, with her arm round her rough bulldog's neck; her calling to a strange dog, running past, with hanging head and lolling tongue, to give it a merciful draught of water, its maddened snap at her, her nobly stern presence of mind, going right into the kitchen, and taking up one of Tabby's red-hot Italian irons to sear the bitten place, and telling no one, till the danger was wellnigh over, for fear of the terrors that might

beset their weaker minds. All this, looked upon as well-invented fiction in 'Shirley,' was written down by Charlotte with streaming eyes; it was the literal true account of what Emily had done. The same tawny bulldog (with his 'strangled whistle'), called 'Tartar' in 'Shirley,' was 'Keeper' in Haworth Parsonage; a gift to Emily. With the gift came a warning. Keeper was faithful to the depths of his nature as long as he was with friends; but he who struck him with a stick or whip roused the relentless nature of the brute, who flew at his throat forthwith, and held him there till one or the other was at the point of death. Now Keeper's household fault was this: he loved to steal upstairs, and stretch his square tawny limbs on the comfortable beds, covered over with delicate white counterpanes. But the cleanliness of the parsonage arrangements was perfect; and this habit of Keeper's was so objectionable that Emily, in reply to Tabby's remonstrances, declared that, if he was found again transgressing, she herself, in defiance of warning and his well-known ferocity of nature, would beat him so severely that he would never offend again. In the gathering dusk of an autumn evening Tabby came, half triumphantly, half tremblingly, but in great wrath, to tell Emily that Keeper was lying on the best bed, in drowsy voluptuousness. Charlotte saw Emily's whitening face and set mouth, but dared not speak to interfere; no one dared when Emily's eyes glowed in that manner out of the paleness of her face, and when her lips were compressed into stone. She went upstairs, and Tabby and Charlotte stood in the gloomy passage below, full of the dark shadows of coming night. Downstairs came Emily, dragging after her the unwilling Keeper, his hind legs set in a heavy attitude of resistance, held by the 'scuft of his neck,' but growling low and savagely all the time. The watchers would fain have spoken, but durst not, for fear of taking off Emily's attention, and causing her to avert her head for a moment from the enraged brute. She let him go, planted in a dark corner at the bottom of the stairs; no time was there to fetch stick or rod, for fear of the

strangling clutch at her throat—her bare clenched fist struck against his red fierce eyes, before he had time to make his spring, and, in the language of the turf, she 'punished him' till his eyes were swelled up, and the half-blind, stupefied beast was led to his accustomed lair to have his swollen head fomented and cared for by the very Emily herself. The generous dog owed her no grudge; he loved her dearly ever after; he walked first among the mourners at her funeral; he slept moaning for nights at the door of her empty room, and never, so to speak, rejoiced, dog fashion, after her death. He, in his turn, was mourned over by the surviving sister. Let us somehow hope, in half Red-Indian creed, that he follows Emily now; and, when he rests, sleeps on some soft white bed of dreams, unpunished when he awakes to the life of the land of shadows.

Now we can understand the force of the words, 'Our poor little cat is dead. Emily is sorry.'

CHAPTER XIII

The moors were a great resource this spring; Emily and Charlotte walked out on them perpetually, 'to the great damage of our shoes, but, I hope, to the benefit of our health.' The old plan of school-keeping was often discussed in these rambles; but indoors they set with vigour to shirt-making for the absent Branwell, and pondered in silence over their past and future life. At last they came to a determination.

'I have seriously entered into the enterprise of keeping a school—or rather taking a limited number of pupils at home. That is, I have begun in good earnest to seek for pupils. I wrote to Mrs. (White)' (the lady with whom she had lived as governess, just before going to Brussels), 'not asking her for her daughter—I cannot do that—but informing her of my intention. I received an answer from Mr. (White) expressive of, I believe, sincere regret that I had not informed them a month sooner, in which case, he said, they would gladly have sent me their own daughter, and also Colonel S(tott)'s, but that now both were promised to Miss C(orkhills). I was partly disappointed by this answer, and partly gratified; indeed, I derived quite an impulse of encouragement from the warm assurance that if I had but applied a little sooner they would certainly have sent me their daughter. I own I had misgivings that nobody would be willing to send a child for education to Haworth. These misgivings are partly done away with. I have written also to Mrs. B(usfeild), of Keighley, and have enclosed the diploma which M. Héger gave me before I left Brussels. I have not

yet received her answer, but I wait for it with some anxiety. I do not expect that she will send me any of her children, but if she would I dare say she could recommend me other pupils. Unfortunately she knows us only very slightly. As soon as I can get an assurance of only *one* pupil, I will have cards of terms printed, and will commence the repairs necessary in the house. I wish all that to be done before winter. I think of fixing the board and English education at 25*l.* per annum.'

Again, at a later date, July 24 in the same year, she writes—

'I am driving on with my small matter as well as I can. I have written to all the friends on whom I have the slightest claim, and to some on whom I have no claim; Mrs. B(usfeild), for example. On her, also, I have actually made bold to call. She was exceedingly polite; regretted that her children were already at school at Liverpool; thought the undertaking a most praiseworthy one, but feared I should have some difficulty in making it succeed on account of the *situation*. Such is the answer I receive from almost every one. I tell them the *retired situation* is, in some points of view, an advantage; that were it in the midst of a large town I could not pretend to take pupils on terms so moderate—Mrs. B(usfeild) remarked that she thought the terms very moderate—but that, as it is, not having house-rent to pay, we can offer the same privileges of education that are to be had in expensive seminaries, at little more than half their price; and, as our number must be limited, we can devote a large share of time and pains to each pupil. Thank you for the very pretty little purse you have sent me. I make you a curious return in the shape of half a dozen cards of terms. Make such use of them as your judgment shall dictate. You will see that I have fixed the sum at 35*l.*, which I think is the just medium, considering advantages and disadvantages.'

This was written in July; August, September, and October passed away, and no pupils were to be heard of. Day after

day there was a little hope felt by the sisters until the post came in. But Haworth village was wild and lonely, and the Brontës but little known, owing to their want of connections. Charlotte writes on the subject, in the early winter months, to this effect:—

'I, Emily, and Anne are truly obliged to you for the efforts you have made in our behalf; and if you have not been successful you are only like ourselves. Every one wishes us well; but there are no pupils to be had. We have no present intention, however, of breaking our hearts on the subject, still less of feeling mortified at defeat. The effort must be beneficial, whatever the result may be, because it teaches us experience, and an additional knowledge of this world. I send you two more circulars.'[1]

[1] The circular ran as follows:—

THE MISSES BRONTË'S ESTABLISHMENT
FOR
THE BOARD AND EDUCATION
OF A LIMITED NUMBER OF
YOUNG LADIES,
THE PARSONAGE, HAWORTH,
NEAR BRADFORD.

TERMS.

	£	s.	d.
Board and Education, including Writing, Arithmetic, History, Grammar, Geography, and Needle Work, per Annum	35	0	0
French, German, Latin — each per Quarter	1	1	0
Music, Drawing — each per Quarter	1	1	0
Use of Piano Forte, per Quarter	0	5	0
Washing, per Quarter	0	15	0

Each Young Lady to be provided with One Pair of Sheets, Pillow Cases, Four Towels, a Dessert and Tea Spoon.

A Quarter's Notice, or a Quarter's Board, is required previous to the Removal of a Pupil.

A month later she says—

'We have made no alterations yet in our house. It would be folly to do so, while there is so little likelihood of our ever getting pupils. I fear you are giving yourself too much trouble on our account. Depend upon it, if you were to persuade a mamma to bring her child to Haworth, the aspect of the place would frighten her, and she would probably take the dear girl back with her instanter. We are glad that we have made the attempt, and we will not be cast down because it has not succeeded.'

There were, probably, growing up in each sister's heart secret unacknowledged feelings of relief that their plan had not succeeded. Yes! a dull sense of relief that their cherished project had been tried and had failed. For that house, which was to be regarded as an occasional home for their brother, could hardly be a fitting residence for the children of strangers. They had, in all likelihood, become silently aware that his habits were such as to render his society at times most undesirable. Possibly, too, they had, by this time, heard distressing rumours concerning the cause of that remorse and agony of mind which at times made him restless and unnaturally merry, at times rendered him moody and irritable.

In January 1845 Charlotte says, 'Branwell has been quieter and less irritable on the whole this time than he was in summer. Anne is, as usual, always good, mild, and patient.' The deep-seated pain which he was to occasion to his relations had now taken a decided form, and pressed heavily on Charlotte's health and spirits. Early in this year she went to H.[1] to bid good-bye to her dear friend 'Mary, who was leaving England for Australia.

Branwell, I have mentioned, had obtained the situation of a private tutor. Anne was also engaged as governess in the same family, and was thus a miserable witness to her

[1] Hunsworth, the residence of the Taylors at this time. Mary was going to New Zealand, not Australia.

brother's deterioration of character at this period. Of the causes of this deterioration I cannot speak; but the consequences were these: He went home for his holidays reluctantly, stayed there as short a time as possible, perplexing and distressing them all by his extraordinary conduct—at one time in the highest spirits, at another in the deepest depression—accusing himself of blackest guilt and treachery, without specifying what they were; and altogether evincing an irritability of disposition bordering on insanity.

Charlotte and Emily suffered acutely from his mysterious behaviour. He expressed himself more than satisfied with his situation; he was remaining in it for a longer time than he had ever done in any kind of employment before; so that for some time they could not conjecture that anything there made him so wilful and restless and full of both levity and misery. But a sense of something wrong connected with him sickened and oppressed them. They began to lose all hope in his future career. He was no longer the family pride; an indistinct dread, caused partly by his own conduct partly by expressions of agonising suspicion in Anne's letters home, was creeping over their minds that he might turn out their deep disgrace. But, I believe, they shrank from any attempt to define their fears, and spoke of him to each other as little as possible. They could not help but think, and mourn, and wonder.

'February 20, 1845.

'I spent a week at H(unsworth), not very pleasantly; headache, sickliness, and flatness of spirits made me a poor companion, a sad drag on the vivacious and loquacious gaiety of all the other inmates of the house. I never was fortunate enough to be able to rally, for as much as a single hour, while I was there. I am sure all, with the exception perhaps, of Mary, were very glad when I took my departure. I begin to perceive that I have too little life in me, nowadays, to be fit company for any except very quiet people. Is it age, or what else, that changes me so?'

Alas! she hardly needed to have asked this question. How could she be otherwise than 'flat-spirited,' 'a poor companion,' and a 'sad drag' on the gaiety of those who were light-hearted and happy? Her honest plan for earning her own livelihood had fallen away, crumbled to ashes; after all her preparations not a pupil had offered herself; and, instead of being sorry that this wish of many years could not be realised, she had reason to be glad. Her poor father, nearly sightless, depended upon her cares in his blind helplessness; but this was a sacred, pious charge, the duties of which she was blessed in fulfilling. The black gloom hung over what had once been the brightest hope of the family—over Branwell, and the mystery in which his wayward conduct was enveloped. Somehow and some time he would have to turn to his home as a hiding-place for shame; such was the sad foreboding of his sisters. Then how could she be cheerful, when she was losing her dear and noble 'Mary,' for such a length of time and distance of space that her heart might well prophesy that it was 'for ever'? Long before she had written of Mary T(aylor) that she 'was full of feelings noble, warm, generous, devoted, and profound. God bless her! I never hope to see in this world a character more truly noble. She would *die* willingly for one she loved. Her intellect and attainments are of the very highest standard.' And this was the friend whom she was to lose! Hear that friend's account of their final interview:—

'When I last saw Charlotte (Jan. 1845) she told me she had quite decided to stay at home. She owned she did not like it. Her health was weak. She said she would like any change at first, as she had liked Brussels at first, and she thought that there must be some possibility for some people of having a life of more variety and more communion with human kind, but she saw none for her. I told her very warmly that she ought not to stay at home; that to spend the next five years at home, in solitude and weak health, would ruin her; that she would never recover it. Such a

dark shadow came over her face when I said, "Think of what you'll be five years hence!" that I stopped, and said, "Don't cry, Charlotte!" She did not cry, but went on walking up and down the room, and said in a little while, "But I intend to stay, Polly."'

A few weeks after she parted from Mary she gives this account of her days at Haworth:—

'March 24, 1845.

'I can hardly tell you how time gets on at Haworth. There is no event whatever to mark its progress. One day resembles another; and all have heavy, lifeless physiognomies. Sunday, baking day, and Saturday are the only ones that have any distinctive mark. Meantime life wears away. I shall soon be thirty; and I have done nothing yet. Sometimes I get melancholy at the prospect before and behind me. Yet it is wrong and foolish to repine. Undoubtedly my duty directs me to stay at home for the present. There was a time when Haworth was a very pleasant place to me; it is not so now. I feel as if we were all buried here. I long to travel; to work; to live a life of action. Excuse me, dear, for troubling you with my fruitless wishes. I will put by the rest, and not trouble you with them. You *must* write to me. If you knew how welcome your letters are, you would write very often. Your letters, and the French newspapers, are the only messengers that come to me from the outer world beyond our moors; and very welcome messengers they are.'

One of her daily employments was to read to her father, and it required a little gentle diplomacy on her part to effect this duty; for there were times when the offer of another to do what he had been so long accustomed to do for himself only reminded him too painfully of the deprivation under which he was suffering. And, in secret, she, too, dreaded a similar loss for herself. Long-continued ill-health, a deranged condition of the liver, her close application to minute drawing and writing in her younger days, her now habitual

sleeplessness at nights, the many bitter noiseless tears she had shed over Branwell's mysterious and distressing conduct —all these causes were telling on her poor eyes; and about this time she thus writes to M. Héger:—

'Il n'y a rien que je crains comme le désœuvrement, l'inertie, la léthargie des facultés. Quand le corps est paresseux l'esprit souffre cruellement; je ne connaîtrais pas cette léthargie si je pouvais écrire. Autrefois je passais des journées, des semaines, des mois entiers à écrire, et pas tout à fait sans fruit, puisque Southey et Coleridge, deux de nos meilleurs auteurs, à qui j'ai envoyé certains manuscrits, en ont bien voulu témoigner leur approbation; mais à présent j'ai la vue trop faible; si j'écrivais beaucoup je deviendrais aveugle. Cette faiblesse de vue est pour moi une terrible privation; sans cela savez-vous ce que je ferais, monsieur? J'écrirais un livre et je le dédierais à mon maître de littérature, au seul maître que j'aie jamais eu—à vous, monsieur! Je vous ai dit souvent en français combien je vous respecte, combien je suis redevable à votre bonté, à vos conseils. Je voudrais le dire une fois en anglais. Cela ne se peut pas; il ne faut pas y penser. La carrière des lettres m'est fermée. . . . N'oubliez pas de me dire comment vous vous portez, comment madame et les enfants se portent. Je compte bientôt avoir de vos nouvelles; cette idée me souris, car le souvenir de vos bontés ne s'effacera jamais de ma mémoire, et tant que ce souvenir durera le respect que vous m'avez inspiré durera aussi. Agréez, monsieur,' &c.

It is probable that even her sisters and most intimate friends did not know of this dread of ultimate blindness which beset her at this period. What eyesight she had to spare she reserved for the use of her father. She did but little plain-sewing; not more writing than could be avoided, and employed herself principally in knitting.

'April 2, 1845.

'I see plainly it is proved to us that there is scarcely a

draught of unmingled happiness to be had in this world. George's [1] illness comes with Mary's marriage. Mary Taylor finds herself free, and on that path to adventure and exertion to which she has so long been seeking admission. Sickness, hardship, danger are her fellow-travellers—her inseparable companions. She may have been out of the reach of these S.W.N.W. gales, before they began to blow, or they may have spent their fury on land, and not ruffled the sea much. If it has been otherwise she has been sorely tossed, while we have been sleeping in our beds, or lying awake thinking about her. Yet these real, material dangers, when once past, leave in the mind the satisfaction of having struggled with difficulty, and overcome it. Strength, courage, and experience are their invariable results; whereas I doubt whether suffering purely mental has any good result, unless it be to make us by comparison less sensitive to physical suffering.[2] . . . Ten years ago I should have laughed at your account of the blunder you made in mistaking the bachelor doctor of Burlington for a married man. I should have certainly thought you scrupulous overmuch, and wondered how you could possibly regret being civil to a decent individual, merely because he happened to be single, instead of double. Now, however, I can perceive that your scruples are founded on common sense. I know that if women wish to escape the stigma of husband-seeking they must act and look like marble or clay—cold, expressionless, bloodless; for every appearance of feeling, of joy, sorrow, friendliness, antipathy, admiration, disgust, are alike construed by the world into the attempt to hook a husband. Never mind! well-meaning women have their own consciences to comfort

[1] George Nussey is meant. The letter is to his sister. I do not know who the Mary is, probably 'M. A. Ashwell,' a friend of Ellen Nussey's.

[2] The omitted passage runs—

'I repeat, then, Mary Taylor has done well to go to New Zealand, but I wish we could soon have another letter from her. I hope she may write soon from Madeira.'

them after all. Do not, therefore, be too much afraid of showing yourself as you are, affectionate and good-hearted; do not too harshly repress sentiments and feelings excellent in themselves, because you fear that some puppy may fancy that you are letting them come out to fascinate him; do not condemn yourself to live only by halves, because if you showed too much animation some pragmatical thing in breeches might take it into his pate to imagine that you designed to dedicate your life to his inanity. Still, a composed, decent, equable deportment is a capital treasure to a woman, and that you possess. Write again soon, for I feel rather fierce and want stroking down.'

'June 13, 1845.

'As to the Mrs. P——, who, you say, is like me, I somehow feel no leaning to her at all. I never do to people who are said to be like me, because I have always a notion that they are only like me in the disagreeable, outside, first-acquaintance part of my character; in those points which are obvious to the ordinary run of people, and which I know are not pleasing. You say she is "clever"—"a clever person." How I dislike the term! It means rather a shrewd, very ugly, meddling, talking woman. . . . I feel reluctant to leave papa for a single day. His sight diminishes weekly; and can it be wondered at that, as he sees the most precious of his faculties leaving him, his spirits sometimes sink? It is so hard to feel that his few and scanty pleasures must all soon go. He has now the greatest difficulty in either reading or writing; and then he dreads the state of dependence to which blindness will inevitably reduce him. He fears that he will be nothing in his parish. I try to cheer him; sometimes I succeed temporarily, but no consolation can restore his sight, or atone for the want of it. Still he is never peevish; never impatient; only anxious and dejected.'

For the reason just given Charlotte declined an invitation to the only house to which she was now ever asked to come.

In answer to her correspondent's reply to this letter she says [1]—

'You thought I refused you coldly, did you? It was a queer sort of coldness, when I would have given my ears to say Yes, and was obliged to say No. Matters, however, are now a little changed. Anne is come home, and her presence certainly makes me feel more at liberty. Then, if all be well, I will come and see you' (at Hathersage). 'Tell me only when I must come. Mention the week and the day. Have the kindness also to answer the following queries, if you can. How far is it from Leeds to Sheffield? Can you give me a notion of the cost? Of course, when I come, you will let me enjoy your own company in peace, and not drag me out a-visiting. I have no desire at all to see your curate. I think he must be like all the other curates I have seen; and they seem to me a self-seeking, vain, empty race. At this blessed moment we have no less than three of them in Haworth Parish—and there is not one to mend another. The other day they all three, accompanied by Mr. Smith, of whom, by the way, I have grievous things to tell you, dropped, or rather rushed, in unexpectedly to tea. It was Monday (baking day), and I was hot and tired; still, if they had behaved quietly and decently, I would have served them out their tea in peace; but they began gloryfying themselves and abusing Dissenters in such a manner that my temper lost its balance, and I pronounced a few sentences sharply and rapidly, which struck them all dumb. Papa was greatly horrified also, but I don't regret it.'

On her return from this short visit to her friend [2] she

[1] Letter to Ellen Nussey dated June 5, 1845, and addressed to Hathersage.

[2] This was a three weeks' visit to the house of the Rev. Henry Nussey, who had just become Vicar of Hathersage, in Derbyshire, and was on his honeymoon at the time that his sister Ellen and Charlotte Brontë stayed at his house. Charlotte's only visit to Hathersage is noteworthy because in Hathersage Church are the tombs of Robert Eyre, who fought at Agincourt and died in 1459, and Joan, his wife, who died in 1464. I

travelled with a gentleman in the railway carriage, whose features and bearing betrayed him, in a moment, to be a Frenchman. She ventured to ask him if such was not the case; and, on his admitting it, she further inquired if he had not passed a considerable time in Germany, and was answered that he had; her quick ear detected something of the thick, guttural pronunciation which, Frenchmen say, they are able to discover even in the grandchildren of their countrymen who have lived any time beyond the Rhine. Charlotte had retained her skill in the language by the habit of which she thus speaks to M. Héger :—

'Je crains beaucoup d'oublier le français—j'apprends tous les jours une demi-page de français par cœur, et j'ai grand plaisir à appendre cette leçon. Veuillez présenter à madame l'assurance de mon estime; je crains que Marie-Louise et Claire ne m'aient déjà oubliée; mais je vous reverrai un jour; aussitôt que j'aurai gagné assez d'argent pour aller à Bruxelles, j'y irai.'

And so her journey back to Haworth, after the rare pleasure of this visit to her friend, was pleasantly beguiled by conversation with the French gentleman; and she arrived at home refreshed and happy. What to find there?

It was ten o'clock when she reached the parsonage. Branwell was there, unexpectedly, very ill. He had come home a day or two before, apparently for a holiday; in reality, I imagine, because some discovery had been made which rendered his absence imperatively desirable. The day of Charlotte's return he had received a letter from Mr. (Robinson), sternly dismissing him, intimating that his proceedings were discovered, characterising them as bad beyond expression, and charging him, on pain of exposure, to break

have already suggested that the only 'Jane' in the Brontë story was associated with school days at Cowan Bridge, but it is not difficult to believe that Joan Eyre, wife of the old armour-clad warrior, suggested the title for Miss Brontë's most famous book. In Hathersage churchyard the grave of Robin Hood's comrade, 'Little John,' is shown, 10 feet 6 inches long.

off immediately, and for ever, all communication with every member of the family.

Whatever may have been the nature and depth of Branwell's sins—whatever may have been his temptation, whatever his guilt—there is no doubt of the suffering which his conduct entailed upon his poor father and his innocent sisters. The hopes and plans they had cherished long, and laboured hard to fulfil, were cruelly frustrated; henceforward their days were embittered and the natural rest of their nights destroyed by his paroxysms of remorse. Let us read of the misery caused to his poor sisters in Charlotte's own affecting words: [1]—

'We have had sad work with Branwell. He thought of nothing but stunning or drowning his agony of mind. No one in this house could have rest; and, at last, we have been obliged to send him from home for a week, with some one to look after him. He has written to me this morning, expressing some sense of contrition . . . but as long as he remains at home I scarce dare hope for peace in the house. We must all, I fear, prepare for a season of distress and disquietude. When I left you I was strongly impressed with the feeling that I was going back to sorrow.'

'August 1845.

'Things here at home are much as usual; not very bright as regards Branwell, though his health, and consequently his temper, have been somewhat better this last day or two, because he is now *forced* to abstain.'

'August 18, 1845.

'I have delayed writing, because I have no good news to communicate. My hopes ebb low indeed about Branwell. I sometimes fear he will never be fit for much. The late blow to his prospects and feelings has quite made him reckless. It is only absolute want of means that acts as any

[1] Extracted from various letters to Ellen Nussey.

check to him. One ought, indeed, to hope to the very last; and I try to do so, but occasionally hope in his case seems so fallacious.'

'November 4, 1845.

'I hoped to be able to ask you to come to Haworth. It almost seemed as if Branwell had a chance of getting employment, and I waited to know the result of his efforts, in order to say, "Dear Ellen, come and see us." But the place (a secretaryship to a railway committee) is given to another person. Branwell still remains at home; and while *he* is here *you* shall not come. I am more confirmed in that resolution the more I see of him. I wish I could say one word to you in his favour, but I cannot. I will hold my tongue. We are all obliged to you for your kind suggestion about Leeds; but I think our school schemes are, for the present, at rest.'

'December 31, 1845.

'You say well, in speaking of (Branwell), that no sufferings are so awful as those brought on by dissipation; alas! I see the truth of this observation daily proved. —— and —— must have as weary and burdensome a life of it in waiting upon their unhappy brother. It seems grievous, indeed, that those who have not sinned should suffer so largely.'

In fact, all their latter days blighted with the presence of cruel, shameful suffering—the premature deaths of two at least of the sisters—all the great possibilities of their earthly lives snapped short—may be dated from midsummer 1845.

For the last three years of Branwell's life he took opium habitually, by way of stunning conscience; he drank, moreover, whenever he could get the opportunity. The reader may say that I have mentioned his tendency to intemperance long before. It is true; but it did not become habitual, as far as I can learn, until after he was dismissed from his tutorship. He took opium, because it made him forget for a time more effectually than drink; and, besides, it was more

portable. In procuring it he showed all the cunning of the opium-eater. He would steal out while the family were at church—to which he had professed himself too ill to go—and manage to cajole the village druggist out of a lump; or, it might be, the carrier had unsuspiciously brought him some in a packet from a distance. For some time before his death he had attacks of delirium tremens of the most frightful character; he slept in his father's room, and he would sometimes declare that either he or his father would be dead before the morning. The trembling sisters, sick with fright, would implore their father not to expose himself to this danger; but Mr. Brontë is no timid man, and perhaps he felt that he could possibly influence his son to some self-restraint, more by showing trust in him than by showing fear. The sisters often listened for the report of a pistol in the dead of the night, till watchful eye and hearkening ear grew heavy and dull with the perpetual strain upon their nerves. In the mornings young Brontë would saunter out, saying, with a drunkard's incontinence of speech, 'The poor old man and I have had a terrible night of it; he does his best—the poor old man! but it's all over with me.'

CHAPTER XIV

In the course of this sad autumn of 1845 a new interest came up; faint, indeed, and often lost sight of in the vivid pain and constant pressure of anxiety respecting their brother. In the biographical notice of her sisters, which Charlotte prefixed to the edition of 'Wuthering Heights' and 'Agnes Grey' published in 1850—a piece of writing unique, as far as I know, in its pathos and its power—she says—

'One day in the autumn of 1845 I accidentally lighted on a MS. volume of verse, in my sister Emily's handwriting. Of course I was not surprised, knowing that she could and did write verse. I looked it over, and something more than surprise seized me—a deep conviction that these were not common effusions, nor at all like the poetry women generally write. I thought them condensed and terse, vigorous and genuine. To my ear they had also a peculiar music, wild, melancholy, and elevating. My sister Emily was not a person of demonstrative character, nor one on the recesses of whose mind and feelings even those nearest and dearest to her could, with impunity, intrude unlicensed: it took hours to reconcile her to the discovery I had made, and days to persuade her that such poems merited publication. . . . Meantime my younger sister quietly produced some of her own compositions, intimating that since Emily's had given me pleasure I might like to look at hers. I could not but be a partial judge, yet I thought that these verses too had a sweet, sincere pathos of their own. We had very early cherished the dream of one day being authors. . . . We agreed to arrange

a small selection of our poems, and, if possible, get them printed. Averse to personal publicity, we veiled our own names under those of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell; the ambiguous choice being dictated by a sort of conscientious scruple at assuming Christian names positively masculine, while we did not like to declare ourselves women, because —without at the time suspecting that our mode of writing and thinking was not what is called "feminine"—we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice; we noticed how critics sometimes used for their chastisement the weapon of personality, and for their reward a flattery which is not true praise. The bringing out of our little book was hard work. As was to be expected, neither we nor our poems were at all wanted; but for this we had been prepared at the outset; though inexperienced ourselves, we had read of the experience of others. The great puzzle lay in the difficulty of getting answers of any kind from the publishers to whom we applied. Being greatly harassed by this obstacle; I ventured to apply to the Messrs. Chambers, of Edinburgh, for a word of advice; *they* may have forgotten the circumstance, but *I* have not, for from them I received a brief and business-like, but civil and sensible reply, on which we acted, and at last made way.'

I inquired from Mr. Robert Chambers, and found, as Miss Brontë conjectured, that he had entirely forgotten the application which had been made to him and his brother for advice; nor had they any copy or memorandum of the correspondence.

There is an intelligent man living in Haworth [1] who has given me some interesting particulars relating to the sisters about this period. He says—

[1] Mr. Greenwood, who died at Haworth in 1863. He lived in the middle of the Town Gate, about halfway up the street on the right-hand side. An accident in his youth caused him to appear somewhat deformed, one shoulder being higher than the other. The inscription on his tomb in Haworth churchyard runs as follows:—

'In loving remembrance of John Greenwood, of Haworth, who died March 25, 1863, aged 56 years.'

'I have known Miss Brontë as Miss Brontë a long time; indeed, ever since they came to Haworth in 1819. But I had not much acquaintance with the family till about 1843, when I began to do a little in the stationery line. Nothing of that kind could be had nearer than Keighley before I began. They used to buy a great deal of writing-paper, and I used to wonder whatever they did with so much. I sometimes thought they contributed to the magazines. When I was out of stock I was always afraid of their coming; they seemed so distressed about it if I had none. I have walked to Halifax (a distance of ten miles) many a time for half a ream of paper, for fear of being without it when they came. I could not buy more at a time for want of capital. I was always short of that. I did so like them to come when I had anything for them; they were so much different to anybody else; so gentle and kind, and so very quiet. They never talked much. Charlotte sometimes would sit and inquire about our circumstances so kindly and feelingly! . . . Though I am a poor working man (which I have never felt to be any degradation), I could talk with her with the greatest freedom. I always felt quite at home with her. Though I never had any school education, I never felt the want of it in her company.'

The publishers to whom she finally made a successful application for the production of 'Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell's poems' were Messrs. Aylott & Jones, Paternoster Row.[1] Mr. Aylott has kindly placed at my disposal the

[1] Aylott and Jones were two young booksellers and stationers of 8 Paternoster Row, who published scarcely any books, but whose name will always be associated with two volumes now of considerable value in the eyes of collectors—*Poems*, by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell, a copy of which was sold at Sotheby's in 1899 for 18*l.*, and *The Germ: Thoughts towards Nature in Poetry, Literature, and Art*, the latter issued on commission for D. G. Rossetti and his Pre-Raphaelite colleagues, a copy of which now sells for from ten pounds to twenty pounds.

letters which she wrote to them on the subject.[1] The first is dated January 28, 1846, and in it she inquires if they will publish one volume octavo of poems; if not at their own risk, on the author's account. It is signed 'C. Brontë.' They must have replied pretty speedily, for on January 31 she writes again—

'Gentlemen,—Since you agree to undertake the publication of the work respecting which I applied to you, I should wish now to know, as soon as possible, the cost of paper and printing. I will then send the necessary remittance, together with the manuscript. I should like it to be printed in one octavo volume, of the same quality of paper and size of type as Moxon's last edition of Wordsworth. The poems will occupy, I should think, from 200 to 250 pages. They are not the production of a clergyman, nor are they exclusively of a religious character; but I presume these circumstances will be immaterial. It will, perhaps, be necessary that you should see the manuscript, in order to calculate accurately the expense of publication; in that case I will send it immediately. I should like, however, previously to have some idea of the probable cost; and if, from what I have said, you can make a rough calculation on the subject, I should be greatly obliged to you.'

In her next letter, February 6, she says—

'You will perceive that the poems are the work of three persons, relatives; their separate pieces are distinguished by their respective signatures.'

She writes again on February 15, and on the 16th she says—

'The MS. will certainly form a thinner volume than I had anticipated. I cannot name another model which I should like it precisely to resemble, yet I think a duodecimo form, and a somewhat reduced, though still *clear* type, would

[1] The originals of these letters are now in the collection brought together by the late Mr. Alfred Morrison. There are some few letters not printed by Mrs. Gaskell, but they are immaterial.

be preferable. I only stipulate for *clear* type, not too small, and good paper.'

On February 21 she selects the 'long primer type' for the poems, and will remit 31*l.* 10*s.* in a few days.

Minute as the details conveyed in these notes are, they are not trivial, because they afford such strong indications of character. If the volume was to be published at their own risk, it was necessary that the sister conducting the negotiation should make herself acquainted with the different kinds of type and the various sizes of books. Accordingly she bought a small volume, from which to learn all she could on the subject of preparation for the press. No half-knowledge —no trusting to other people for decisions which she could make for herself; and yet a generous and full confidence, not misplaced, in the thorough probity of Messrs. Aylott & Jones. The caution in ascertaining the risk before embarking in the enterprise, and the prompt payment of the money required, even before it could be said to have assumed the shape of a debt, were both parts of a self-reliant and independent character. Self-contained also was she. During the whole time that the volume of poems was in the course of preparation and publication no word was written telling any one, out of the household circle, what was in progress.[1]

[1] The title-page ran as follows: '*Poems by Currer, Ellis, & Acton Bell. London: Aylott & Jones, 8 Paternoster Row.* 1846.' Two years later the unbound copies were issued with a title-page bearing the imprint of Smith, Elder, & Co., and the same date, 1846, although it is clear that the sheets could not have been taken over by Smith, Elder, & Co. until 1848. The edition with the Smith, Elder, & Co. title-page has an advertisement of the third edition of *Jane Eyre*, of the second edition of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, and of the first edition of *Wuthering Heights*. *Wildfell Hall* was not in its second edition until 1848. The question is set at rest by the two following letters:—

TO GEORGE SMITH, ESQ.

'September 7, 1848.

'My dear Sir,—You are probably aware that C., E., and A. Bell published, a year or two since, a volume of Poems which, not being largely advertised, had but a limited sale. I wished much to ask your

I have had some of the letters placed in my hands which she addressed to her old schoolmistress, Miss Wooler. They begin a little before this time. Acting on the conviction, which I have all along entertained, that where Charlotte Brontë's own words could be used no others ought to take their place, I shall make extracts from this series, according to their dates.

'January 30, 1846.

'My dear Miss Wooler,—I have not yet paid my visit to B(irstall); it is, indeed, more than a year since I was there, but I frequently hear from Ellen, and she did not fail to tell me that you were gone into Worcestershire; she was unable, however, to give me your exact address. Had I known it I should have written to you long since. I thought you would wonder how we were getting on, when you heard of the railway panic; and you may be sure that I am very glad to be able to answer your kind inquiries by an assurance that our small capital is as yet undiminished. The York and Midland is, as you say, a very good line; yet, I confess to you, I should wish, for my own part, to be wise in time. I cannot think that even the very best lines will continue for many years at their present premiums; and I have been most anxious for us to sell our shares ere it be too late, and to secure the proceeds in some safer, if, for the present, less profitable investment. I cannot, however, persuade my

advice about the disposal of the remaining copies, when in London, but was withheld by the consciousness that "the Trade" are not very fond of hearing about Poetry, and that it is but too often a profitless encumbrance on the shelves of the bookseller's shop. I received to-day, however, the enclosed note from Messrs. Aylott and Jones, which I transmit to you for your consideration.

'Awaiting your answer,

'I remain, my dear Sir,

'Yours sincerely,

'C. Brontë.'

TO GEORGE SMITH, ESQ.

'December 7, 1848.

'My dear Sir,—I have received to-day the sum of 24*l.* 0*s.* 6*d.*, paid by you to Messrs. Aylott and Jones for Bell's Poems. For this I thank you,

sisters to regard the affair precisely from my point of view; and I feel as if I would rather run the risk of loss than hurt Emily's feelings by acting in direct opposition to her opinion. She managed in a most handsome and able manner for me, when I was in Brussels, and prevented by distance from looking after my own interests; therefore I will let her manage still and take the consequences. Disinterested and energetic she certainly is; and if she be not quite so tractable or open to conviction as I could wish, I must remember perfection is not the lot of humanity; and as long as we can regard those we love, and to whom we are closely allied, with profound and never-shaken esteem, it is a small thing that they should vex us occasionally by what appear to us unreasonable and headstrong notions.

'You, my dear Miss Wooler, know, full as well as I do, the value of sisters' affection to each other; there is nothing like it in this world, I believe, when they are nearly equal in age, and similar in education, tastes, and sentiments. You ask about Branwell; he never thinks of seeking employment, and I begin to fear that he has rendered himself incapable of filling any respectable station in life; besides, if money were at his disposal, he would use it only to his own injury; the faculty of self-government is, I fear, almost destroyed in him. You ask me if I do not think that men are strange beings. I do, indeed. I have often thought so; and I think, too, that the mode of bringing them up is strange: they are not sufficiently guarded from temptation. Girls

and beg again to express a hope that the transaction may not in the end prove disadvantageous to you.

'Allow me to mention that my father, as well as my sisters and myself, have derived great pleasure from some of the books you sent; he is now reading Borrow's *Bible in Spain* with interest, and under present circumstances whatever agreeably occupies his mind must be truly beneficial.

'Believe me, my dear Sir,

'Yours sincerely,

'C. Brontë.'

are protected as if they were something very frail or silly indeed, while boys are turned loose on the world, as if they, of all beings in existence, were the wisest and least liable to be led astray. I am glad you like Bromsgrove, though, I dare say, there are few places you would *not* like with Mrs. M. for a companion. I always feel a peculiar satisfaction when I hear of your enjoying yourself, because it proves that there really is such a thing as retributive justice even in this world. You worked hard; you denied yourself all pleasure, almost all relaxation, in your youth, and in the prime of life; now you are free, and that while you have still, I hope, many years of vigour and health in which you can enjoy freedom. Besides, I have another and very egotistical motive for being pleased; it seems that even "a lone woman" can be happy, as well as cherished wives and proud mothers. I am glad of that. I speculate much on the existence of unmarried and never-to-be-married women nowadays; and I have already got to the point of considering that there is no more respectable character on this earth than an unmarried woman, who makes her own way through life quietly, perseveringly, without support of husband or brother; and who, having attained the age of forty-five or upwards, retains in her possession a well-regulated mind, a disposition to enjoy simple pleasures, and fortitude to support inevitable pains, sympathy with the sufferings of others, and willingness to relieve want as far as her means extend.'

During the time that the negotiation with Messrs. Aylott & Jones was going on Charlotte went to visit her old school friend,[1] with whom she was in such habits of confidential intimacy; but neither then nor afterwards did she ever speak to her of the publication of the poems; nevertheless this young lady suspected that the sisters wrote for magazines; and in this idea she was confirmed when, on one of her visits to Haworth, she saw Anne with a number of

[1] Miss Ellen Nussey.

'Chambers's Journal,'[1] and a gentle smile of pleasure stealing over her placid face as she read.

'What is the matter?' asked the friend. 'Why do you smile?'

'Only because I see they have inserted one of my poems,' was the quiet reply; and not a word more was said on the subject.

To this friend Charlotte addressed the following letters:—

'March 3, 1846.

'I reached home a little after two o'clock, all safe and right yesterday; I found papa very well; his sight much the same. Emily and Anne were going to Keighley to meet me; unfortunately I had returned by the old road, while they were gone by the new, and we missed each other. They did not get home till half-past four, and were caught in the heavy shower of rain which fell in the afternoon. I am sorry to say Anne has taken a little cold in consequence, but I hope she will soon be well. Papa was much cheered by my report of Mr. C.'s opinion, and of old Mrs. E.'s experience;[2] but I could perceive he caught gladly at the idea of deferring the operation a few months longer. I went into the room where Branwell was, to speak to him, about an hour after I got home: it was very forced work to address him. I might have spared myself the trouble, as he took no notice and made no reply; he was stupefied. My fears were not in vain. I hear that he got a sovereign while I have been away, under pretence of paying a pressing debt; he went immediately and changed it at a public-house, and has employed it as was to be expected. Emily concluded her account by saying he was a "hopeless being;" it is too true. In his present state it is scarcely possible to stay in the room where he is. What the future has in store I do not know.'

[1] *Chambers's Journal* was founded in 1832. The present editor of the *Journal*, Mr. C. E. S. Chambers, has kindly forwarded to me Mrs. Gaskell's correspondence with the firm, and has endeavoured, without success, to identify Anne's poem.

[2] In the original letter it runs, 'Mr. Carr's opinion, and of old Mrs. Carr's experience,' but these identifications are, of course, quite valueless.

'March 31, 1846.

'Our poor old servant Tabby had a sort of fit, a fortnight since, but is nearly recovered now. Martha'[1] (the girl they had to assist poor old Tabby, and who remains still the faithful servant at the parsonage) 'is ill with a swelling in her knee, and obliged to go home. I fear it will be long before she is in working condition again. I received the number of the "Record" you sent. . . . I read D'Aubigné's letter. It is clever, and in what he says about Catholicism very good. The Evangelical Alliance part is not very practicable, yet certainly it is more in accordance with the spirit of the Gospel to preach unity among Christians than to inculcate mutual intolerance and hatred. I am very glad I went to B(rookroyd) when I did, for the changed weather has somewhat changed my health and strength since. How do you get on? I long for mild south and west winds. I am thankful papa continues pretty well, though often made very miserable by Branwell's wretched conduct. *There*—there is no change but for the worse.'

Meanwhile the printing of the volume of poems was quietly proceeding. After some consultation and deliberation the sisters had determined to correct the proofs themselves. Up to March 28 the publishers had addressed their correspondent as 'C. Brontë, Esq.;' but at this time some 'little mistake occurred,' and she desired Messrs. Aylott & Jones in future to direct to her real address, '*Miss* Brontë,' &c. She had, however, evidently left it to be implied that she was not acting on her own behalf, but as agent for the real authors, since in a note dated April 6 she makes a proposal on behalf of 'C., E., and A. Bell,' which is to the following effect: that they are preparing for the press a work of fiction, consisting of three distinct and unconnected tales, which may be published either together, as a work of three volumes, of the ordinary novel size, or separately, as single volumes, as may be deemed most advisable. She states, in addition, that it is not their intention to publish these tales on their

[1] Martha Brown. See note, p. 57.

own account, but that the authors direct her to ask Messrs. Aylott & Jones whether they would be disposed to undertake the work, after having, of course, by due inspection of the MS., ascertained that its contents are such as to warrant an expectation of success.[1] To this letter of inquiry the publishers replied speedily, and the tenor of their answer may be gathered from Charlotte's, dated April 11.

'I beg to thank you, in the name of C., E., and A. Bell, for your obliging offer of advice. I will avail myself of it to request information on two or three points. It is evident that unknown authors have great difficulties to contend with, before they can succeed in bringing their works before the public. Can you give me any hint as to the way in which these difficulties are best met? For instance, in the present case, where a work of fiction is in question, in what form would a publisher be most likely to accept the MS., whether offered as a work of three vols., or as tales which might be published in numbers, or as contributions to a periodical?

'What publishers would be most likely to receive favourably a proposal of this nature?

'Would it suffice to *write* to a publisher on the subject,

[1] Here is the actual letter:—

'April 6, 1846.

'Gentlemen,—C., E., and A. Bell are now preparing for the press a work of fiction consisting of three distinct and unconnected tales, which may be published either together, as a work of three volumes, of the ordinary novel size, or separately as single volumes, as shall be deemed most advisable.

'It is not their intention to publish these tales on their own account. They direct me to ask you whether you would be disposed to undertake the work, after having, of course, by due inspection of the MS., ascertained that its contents are such as to warrant an expectation of success.

'An early answer will oblige, as, in case of your negativing the proposal, inquiry must be made of other publishers.—I am, gentlemen, yours truly,

C. Brontë.'

or would it be necessary to have recourse to a personal interview?

'Your opinion and advice on these three points, or on any other which your experience may suggest as important, would be esteemed by us as a favour.'

It is evident from the whole tenor of this correspondence that the truthfulness and probity of the firm of publishers with whom she had to deal in this her first literary venture were strongly impressed upon her mind, and was followed by the inevitable consequence of reliance on their suggestions. And the progress of the poems was not unreasonably lengthy or long drawn out. On April 20 she writes to desire that three copies may be sent to her, and that Messrs. Aylott & Jones will advise her as to the reviewers to whom copies ought to be sent.

I give the next letter as illustrating the ideas of these girls as to what periodical reviews or notices led public opinion.

'The poems to be neatly done up in cloth. Have the goodness to send copies and advertisements, *as early as possible*, to each of the undermentioned periodicals:—

'"Colburn's New Monthly Magazine."

'"Bentley's Magazine."

'"Hood's Magazine."

'"Jerrold's Shilling Magazine."

'"Blackwood's Magazine."

'"The Edinburgh Review."

'"Tait's Edinburgh Magazine."

'"The Dublin University Magazine."[1]

'Also to the "Daily News" and to the "Britannia" newspapers.

[1] To the editor of the *Dublin University Magazine* she wrote on October 6, 1846, as follows:—

'Sir,—I thank you in my own name and that of my brothers, Ellis and Acton, for the indulgent notice that appeared in your last number of our first humble efforts in literature; but I thank you far more for the

'If there are any other periodicals to which you have been in the habit of sending copies of works, let them be supplied also with copies. I think those I have mentioned will suffice for advertising.'

In compliance with this latter request Messrs. Aylott suggest that copies and advertisements of the work should be sent to the 'Athenæum,' 'Literary Gazette,' 'Critic,' and 'Times;' but in her reply Miss Brontë says that she thinks the periodicals she first mentioned will be sufficient for advertising in at present, as the authors do not wish to lay out a larger sum than two pounds in advertising, esteeming the success of a work dependent more on the notice it receives from periodicals than on the quantity of advertisements. In case of any notice of the poems appearing, whether favourable or otherwise, Messrs. Aylott & Jones are requested to send her the name and number of those periodicals in which such notices appear; as otherwise, since she has not the opportunity of seeing periodicals regularly, she may miss reading the critique. 'Should the poems be remarked upon favourably, it is my intention to appropriate a further sum for advertisements. If, on the other hand, they should pass unnoticed or be condemned, I consider it would be quite useless to advertise, as there is nothing, either in the title of the work or the names of the authors, to attract attention from a single individual.'

essay on modern poetry which preceded that notice—an essay in which seems to me to be condensed the very spirit of truth and beauty. If all or half your other readers shall have derived from its perusal the delight it afforded to myself and my brothers, your labours have produced a rich result.

'After such criticism an author may indeed be smitten at first by a sense of his own insignificance—as we were—but on a second and a third perusal he finds a power and beauty therein which stirs him to a desire to do more and better things. It fulfils the right end of criticism: without absolutely crushing it corrects and rouses. I again thank you heartily, and beg to subscribe myself,—Your constant and grateful reader,

CURRER BELL.'

I suppose the little volume of poems was published some time about the end of May 1846. It stole into life; some weeks passed over, without the mighty murmuring public discovering that three more voices were uttering their speech. And, meanwhile, the course of existence moved drearily along from day to day with the anxious sisters, who must have forgotten their sense of authorship in the vital care gnawing at their hearts. On June 17 Charlotte writes:—

'Branwell declares that he neither can nor will do anything for himself; good situations have been offered him, for which, by a fortnight's work, he might have qualified himself, but he will do nothing except drink and make us all wretched.'

In the 'Athenæum' of July 4, under the head of 'Poetry for the Million,' came a short review of the poems of C., E., and A. Bell. The reviewer assigns to Ellis the highest rank of the three 'brothers,' as he supposes them to be; he calls Ellis 'a fine, quaint spirit;' and speaks of 'an evident power of wing that may reach heights not here attempted.' Again, with some degree of penetration, the reviewer says that the poems of Ellis 'convey an impression of originality beyond what his contributions to these volumes embody.' Currer is placed midway between Ellis and Acton. But there is little in the review to strain out, at this distance of time, as worth preserving. Still, we can fancy with what interest it was read at Haworth Parsonage, and how the sisters would endeavour to find out reasons for opinions, or hints for the future guidance of their talents.

I call particular attention to the following letter of Charlotte's, dated July 10, 1846. To whom it was written matters not;[1] but the wholesome sense of duty in it—the sense of the supremacy of that duty which God, in placing us in families, has laid out for us—seems to deserve especial regard in these days:—

[1] It was addressed to Ellen Nussey.

I see you are in a dilemma, and one of a peculiar and difficult nature. Two paths lie before you; you conscientiously wish to choose the right one, even though it be the most steep, strait, and rugged; but you do not know which is the right one; you cannot decide whether duty and religion command you to go out into the cold and friendless world, and there to earn your living by governess drudgery, or whether they enjoin your continued stay with your aged mother, neglecting, *for the present*, every prospect of independency for yourself, and putting up with daily inconvenience, sometimes even with privations. I can well imagine that it is next to impossible for you to decide for yourself in this matter, so I will decide it for you. At least I will tell you what is my earnest conviction on the subject; I will show you candidly how the question strikes me. The right path is that which necessitates the greatest sacrifice of self-interest—which implies the greatest good to others; and this path, steadily followed, will lead, I believe, in time, to prosperity and to happiness, though it may seem, at the outset, to tend quite in a contrary direction. Your mother is both old and infirm; old and infirm people have but few sources of happiness—fewer almost than the comparatively young and healthy can conceive; to deprive them of one of these is cruel. If your mother is more composed when you are with her, stay with her. If she would be unhappy in case you left her, stay with her. It will not apparently, as far as short-sighted humanity can see, be for your advantage to remain at B(rookroyd), nor will you be praised and admired for remaining at home to comfort your mother; yet, probably, your own conscience will approve, and if it does, stay with her. I recommend you to do what I am trying to do myself.'

The remainder of this letter is only interesting to the reader as it conveys a peremptory disclaimer of the report that the writer was engaged to be married to her father's curate—the very same gentleman to whom, eight years after-

wards, she was united;[1] and who, probably, even now, although she was unconscious of the fact, had begun his service to her, in the same tender and faithful spirit as that in which Jacob served for Rachael. Others may have noticed this, though she did not.

A few more notes remain of her correspondence 'on behalf of the Messrs. Bell' with Mr. Aylott. On July 15 she says, 'I suppose, as you have not written, no other notices have yet appeared, nor has the demand for the work increased. Will you favour me with a line stating whether *any*, or how many copies have yet been sold?'

But few, I fear; for, three days later, she wrote the following:—

'The Messrs. Bell desire me to thank you for your suggestion respecting the advertisements. They agree with you that, since the season is unfavourable, advertising had better be deferred. They are obliged to you for the information respecting the number of copies sold.'[2]

[1] It runs as follows:—

'Who gravely asked you whether Miss Brontë was not going to be married to her papa's curate? I scarcely need say that never was rumour more unfounded. A cold, far-away sort of civility are the only terms on which I have ever been with Mr. Nicholls. I could by no means think of mentioning such a rumour to him even as a joke. It would make me the laughing-stock of himself and his fellow curates for half a year to come. They regard me as an old maid, and I regard them, one and all, as highly uninteresting, narrow, and unattractive specimens of the coarser sex.

'Write to me again soon, whether you have anything particular to say or not. Give my sincere love to your mother and sisters.

'C. Brontë.'

[2] The number was *two* only, as will appear from the following letter, addressed to Thomas De Quincey:*—

* *De Quincey Memorials*, by Alexander H. Japp. An exactly similar letter was addressed by 'Currer Bell' to several of the famous authors of her day, to Alfred Tennyson among others. See *Alfred, Lord Tennyson: a Memoir*, by his son. 1898.

On July 23 she writes to Messrs. Aylott & Jones—

'The Messrs. Bell would be obliged to you to post the enclosed note in London. It is an answer to the letter you forwarded, which contained an application for their autographs from a person who professed to have read and admired their poems. I think I before intimated that the Messrs. Bell are desirous for the present of remaining unknown, for which reason they prefer having the note posted in London to sending it direct, in order to avoid giving any clue to residence, or identity by post-mark, &c.' [1]

Once more, in September, she writes, 'As the work has received no further notice from any periodical, I presume the demand for it has not greatly increased.'

In the biographical notice of her sisters she thus speaks of the failure of the modest hopes vested in this publication :—

'The book was printed; it is scarcely known, and all of it that merits to be known are the poems of Ellis Bell.

'The fixed conviction I held, and hold, of the worth of these poems has not, indeed, received the confirmation of much favourable criticism; but I must retain it notwithstanding.'

'June 16, 1847.

'Sir,—My relatives, Ellis and Acton Bell, and myself, heedless of the repeated warnings of various respectable publishers, have committed the rash act of printing a volume of poems.

'The consequences predicted have, of course, overtaken us: our book is found to be a drug; no man needs it or heeds it. In the space of a year our publisher has disposed but of two copies, and by what painful efforts he succeeded in getting rid of these two himself only knows.

'Before transferring the edition to the trunkmakers we have decided on distributing as presents a few copies of what we cannot sell; and we beg to offer you one in acknowledgment of the pleasure and profit we have often and long derived from your works.—I am, sir, yours very respectfully,

CURRER BELL.'

[1] The application was sent by Mr. F. Enoch, of the Corn Market, Warwick. The original autographs are framed and in the possession of the Brontë Museum at Haworth.

CHAPTER XV

During this summer of 1846, while her literary hopes were waning, an anxiety of another kind was increasing. Her father's eyesight had become seriously impaired by the progress of the cataract which was forming. He was nearly blind. He could grope his way about, and recognise the figures of those he knew well, when they were placed against a strong light; but he could no longer see to read; and thus his eager appetite for knowledge and information of all kinds was severely baulked. He continued to preach. I have heard that he was led up into the pulpit, and that his sermons were never so effective as when he stood there, a grey, sightless old man, his blind eyes looking out straight before him, while the words that came from his lips had all the vigour and force of his best days. Another fact has been mentioned to me, curious as showing the accurateness of his sensation of time. His sermons had always lasted exactly half an hour. With the clock right before him, and with his ready flow of words, this had been no difficult matter so long as he could see. But it was the same when he was blind; as the minute hand came to the point, marking the expiration of the thirty minutes, he concluded his sermon.

Under his great sorrow he was always patient. As in times of far greater affliction he enforced a quiet endurance of his woe upon himself. But so many interests were quenched by this blindness that he was driven inwards, and must have dwelt much on what was painful and distressing in regard to his only son. No wonder that his spirits gave way, and were depressed. For some time before this

autumn his daughters had been collecting all the information they could respecting the probable success of operations for cataract performed on a person of their father's age. About the end of July Emily and Charlotte had made a journey to Manchester for the purpose of searching out an operator; and there they heard of the fame of the late Mr. Wilson as an oculist. They went to him at once, but he could not tell, from description, whether the eyes were ready for being operated upon or not. It therefore became necessary for Mr. Brontë to visit him; and towards the end of August Charlotte brought her father to him. He determined at once to undertake the operation, and recommended them to comfortable lodgings kept by an old servant of his. These were one of numerous similar streets of small monotonous-looking houses, in a suburb of the town. From thence the following letter is dated,[1] on August 21, 1846:—

'I just scribble a line to you to let you know where I am, in order that you may write to me here, for it seems to me that a letter from you would relieve me from the feeling of strangeness I have in this big town. Papa and I came here on Wednesday; we saw Mr. Wilson, the oculist, the same day; he pronounced papa's eyes quite ready for an operation, and has fixed next Monday for the performance of it. Think of us on that day! We got into our lodgings yesterday. I think we shall be comfortable; at least our rooms are very good, but there is no mistress of the house (she is very ill, and gone out into the country), and I am somewhat puzzled in managing about provisions; we board ourselves. I find myself excessively ignorant. I can't tell what to order in the way of meat. For ourselves I could contrive, papa's diet is so very simple; but there will be a nurse coming in a day or two, and I am afraid of not having things good enough for her. Papa requires nothing, you know, but

[1] From 83 Mount Pleasant, Boundary Street, Oxford Road, Manchester. The letter, together with the one that follows it, was written to Ellen Nussey.

plain beef and mutton, tea and bread-and-butter; but a nurse will probably expect to live much better: give me some hints, if you can. Mr. Wilson says we shall have to stay here for a month at least. I wonder how Emily and Anne will get on at home with Branwell. They, too, will have their troubles. What would I not give to have you here! One is forced, step by step, to get experience in the world; but the learning is so disagreeable. One cheerful feature in the business is that Mr. Wilson thinks most favourably of the case.'

'August 26, 1846.

'The operation is over; it took place yesterday. Mr. Wilson performed it; two other surgeons assisted. Mr. Wilson says he considers it quite successful; but papa cannot yet see anything. The affair lasted precisely a quarter of an hour; it was not the simple operation of couching Mr. C. described, but the more complicated one of extracting the cataract. Mr. Wilson entirely disapproves of couching. Papa displayed extraordinary patience and firmness; the surgeons seemed surprised. I was in the room all the time, as it was his wish that I should be there; of course I neither spoke nor moved till the thing was done, and then I felt that the less I said, either to papa or the surgeons, the better. Papa is now confined to his bed in a dark room, and is not to be stirred for four days; he is to speak and be spoken to as little as possible. I am greatly obliged to you for your letter, and your kind advice, which gave me extreme satisfaction, because I found I had arranged most things in accordance with it, and, as your theory coincides with my practice, I feel assured the latter is right. I hope Mr. Wilson will soon allow me to dispense with the nurse; she is well enough, no doubt, but somewhat too obsequious; and not, I should think, to be much trusted; yet I was obliged to trust her in some things. . . .

'Greatly was I amused by your account of (Joseph Taylor)'s flirtations; and yet something saddened also. I think Nature intended him for something better than to fritter

away his time in making a set of poor, unoccupied spinsters unhappy. The girls, unfortunately, are forced to care for him, and such as him, because, while their minds are mostly unemployed, their sensations are all unworn, and consequently fresh and green; and he, on the contrary, has had his fill of pleasure, and can, with impunity, make a mere pastime of other people's torments. This is an unfair state of things; the match is not equal. I only wish I had the power to infuse into the souls of the persecuted a little of the quiet strength of pride—of the supporting consciousness of superiority (for they are superior to him, because purer)—of the fortifying resolve of firmness to bear the present, and wait the end. Could all the virgin population of (Birstall and Gomersal) receive and retain these sentiments, he would continually have to vail his crest before them. Perhaps, luckily, their feelings are not so acute as one would think, and the gentleman's shafts consequently don't wound so deeply as he might desire. I hope it is so.'

A few days later she writes thus:[1] 'Papa is still lying in bed, in a dark room, with his eyes bandaged. No inflammation ensued, but still it appears the greatest care, perfect quiet, and utter privation of light are necessary to ensure a good result from the operation. He is very patient, but of course depressed and weary. He was allowed to try his sight for the first time yesterday. He could see dimly. Mr. Wilson seemed perfectly satisfied, and said all was right. I have had bad nights from the toothache since I came to Manchester.'

All this time, notwithstanding the domestic anxieties which were harassing them—notwithstanding the ill-success of their poems—the three sisters were trying that other literary venture to which Charlotte made allusion in one of her letters to the Messrs. Aylott. Each of them had written a prose tale, hoping that the three might be published together. 'Wuthering Heights' and 'Agnes Grey' are be-

[1] On August 31, 1846, to Ellen Nussey.

fore the world. The third, 'The Professor'—Charlotte's contribution—was published shortly after the appearance of the first edition of this memoir.[1] The plot in itself is of no great interest; but it is a poor kind of interest that depends upon startling incidents rather than upon dramatic development of character; and Charlotte Brontë never excelled one or two sketches or portraits which she has given in 'The Professor,' nor, in grace of womanhood, ever surpassed one of the female characters there described. By the time she wrote this tale her taste and judgment had revolted against the exaggerated idealisms of her early girlhood, and she went to the extreme of reality, closely depicting characters as they had shown themselves to her in actual life: if there they were strong even to coarseness—as was the case with some that she had met with in flesh-and-blood existence—she 'wrote them down an ass;' if the scenery of such life as she saw was for the most part wild and grotesque, instead of pleasant or picturesque, she described it line for line. The grace of the one or two scenes and characters which are drawn rather from her own imagination than from absolute fact, stand out in exquisite relief from the deep shadows and wayward lines of others, which call to mind some of the portraits of Rembrandt.

The three tales had tried their fate in vain together; at length they were sent forth separately, and for many months with still-continued ill success. I have mentioned this here because, among the dispiriting circumstances connected with her anxious visit to Manchester, Charlotte told me that her tale came back upon her hands, curtly rejected by some publisher, on the very day when her father was to submit to his operation. But she had the heart of Robert Bruce within her, and failure upon failure daunted her no more

[1] The first edition of *The Professor* was published in two volumes, with a brief introductory note by Mr. A. B. Nicholls, dated September 22, 1856. The title-page ran, '*The Professor: a Tale. By Currer Bell, Author of "Jane Eyre," "Shirley," "Villette," &c. In two volumes. London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 65 Cornhill.* 1857.'

than him. Not only did 'The Professor' return again to try his chance among the London publishers, but she began, in this time of care and depressing inquietude—in those grey, weary, uniform streets, where all faces, save that of her kind doctor, were strange and untouched with sunlight to her—there and then did the brave genius begin 'Jane Eyre.'[1] Read what she herself says:—'Currer Bell's book found acceptance nowhere, nor any acknowledgment of merit, so that something like the chill of despair began to invade his heart.' And, remember, it was not the heart of a person who, disappointed in one hope, can turn with redoubled affection to the many certain blessings that remain. Think of her home, and the black shadow of remorse lying over one in it, till his very brain was mazed, and his gifts and his life were lost; think of her father's sight hanging on a thread; of her sisters' delicate health, and dependence on her care; and then admire, as it deserves to be admired, the steady courage which could work away at 'Jane Eyre,' all the time 'that the one-volume tale was plodding its weary round in London.'

Some of her surviving friends consider that an incident which she heard, when at school at Miss Wooler's, was the germ of the story of 'Jane Eyre.' But of this nothing can be known, except by conjecture. Those to whom she spoke upon the subject of her writings are dead and silent; and the reader may probably have noticed that in the correspondence from which I have quoted there has been no allusion whatever to the publication of her poems, nor is there the least hint of the intention of the sisters to publish any tales. I remember, however, many little particulars which Miss Brontë gave me, in answer to my inquiries respecting her mode of

[1] *The Professor* was considered by six successive publishers before it was read by Mr. Smith Williams, the 'reader' for Smith, Elder, & Co. Mr. Smith Williams, on the strength of her statement that she had 'a second narrative in three volumes now in progress' (see p. 328), suggested that she should complete that novel, and submit it to the firm he represented. Hence *Jane Eyre* was submitted only to the firm that published it.

composition, &c. She said that it was not every day that she could write. Sometimes weeks or even months elapsed before she felt that she had anything to add to that portion of her story which was already written. Then some morning she would waken up, and the progress of her tale lay clear and bright before her, in distinct vision. When this was the case all her care was to discharge her household and filial duties, so as to obtain leisure to sit down and write out the incidents and consequent thoughts, which were, in fact, more present to her mind at such times than her actual life itself. Yet, notwithstanding this 'possession' (as it were), those who survive, of her daily and household companions, are clear in their testimony that never was the claim of any duty, never was the call of another for help neglected for an instant. It had become necessary to give Tabby—now nearly eighty years of age—the assistance of a girl. Tabby relinquished any of her work with a jealous reluctance, and could not bear to be reminded, though ever so delicately, that the acuteness of her senses was dulled by age. The other servant might not interfere with what she chose to consider her exclusive work. Among other things she reserved to herself the right of peeling the potatoes for dinner; but, as she was growing blind, she often left in those black specks which we in the North call the 'eyes' of the potato. Miss Brontë was too dainty a housekeeper to put up with this; yet she could not bear to hurt the faithful old servant by bidding the younger maiden go over the potatoes again, and so reminding Tabby that her work was less effectual than formerly. Accordingly she would steal into the kitchen, and quietly carry off the bowl of vegetables, without Tabby's being aware, and, breaking off in the full flow of interest and inspiration in her writing, carefully cut out the specks in the potatoes, and noiselessly carry them back to their place. This little proceeding may show how orderly and fully she accomplished her duties, even at those times when the 'possession' was upon her.

Any one who has studied her writings, whether in print

or in her letters; any one who has enjoyed the rare privilege of listening to her talk, must have noticed her singular felicity in the choice of words. She herself, in writing her books, was solicitous on this point. One set of words was the truthful mirror of her thoughts; no others, however identical in meaning, would do. She had that strong practical regard for the simple holy truth of expression which Mr. Trench[1] has enforced, as a duty too often neglected. She would wait patiently, searching for the right term, until it presented itself to her. It might be provincial, it might be derived from the Latin; so that it accurately represented her idea she did not mind whence it came; but this care makes her style present the finish of a piece of mosaic. Each component part, however small, has been dropped into the right place. She never wrote down a sentence until she clearly understood what she wanted to say, had deliberately chosen the words, and arranged them in their right order. Hence it comes that, in the scraps of paper covered with her pencil writing which I have seen, there will occasionally be a sentence scored out, but seldom, if ever, a word or an expression. She wrote on these bits of paper in a minute hand, holding each against a piece of board, such as is used in binding books, for a desk.[2] This plan was necessary for one so short-sighted as she was; and, besides, it enabled her to use pencil and paper, as she sat near the fire in the twilight hours, or if (as was too often the case) she was wakeful for hours in the night. Her finished manuscripts were copied from these pencil scraps, in clear, legible, delicately traced writing, almost as easy to read as print.

The sisters retained the old habit, which was begun in their aunt's lifetime, of putting away their work at nine o'clock, and commencing their study, pacing up and down

[1] Richard Chenevix Trench (1807–1886), Archbishop of Dublin. His *Study of Words* was published in 1851, and *English, Past and Present* in 1855.

[2] Mr. Nicholls still preserves one of the broken book-covers upon which, he tells me, his wife wrote *Jane Eyre*.

the sitting-room. At this time they talked over the stories they were engaged upon, and described their plots. Once or twice a week each read to the others what she had written, and heard what they had to say about it. Charlotte told me that the remarks made had seldom any effect in inducing her to alter her work, so possessed was she with the feeling that she had described reality; but the readings were of great and stirring interest to all, taking them out of the gnawing pressure of daily recurring cares, and setting them in a free place. It was on one of these occasions that Charlotte determined to make her heroine plain, small, and unattractive, in defiance of the accepted canon.

The writer of the beautiful obituary article on 'the death of Currer Bell'[1] most likely learnt from herself what is there stated, and which I will take the liberty of quoting, about 'Jane Eyre.'

'She once told her sisters that they were wrong—even morally wrong—in making their heroines beautiful as a matter of course. They replied that it was impossible to make a heroine interesting on any other terms. Her answer was, "I will prove to you that you are wrong; I will show you a heroine as plain and as small as myself, who shall be as interesting as any of yours." Hence "Jane Eyre," said she in telling the anecdote: "but she is not myself any further than that." As the work went on the interest deepened to the writer. When she came to 'Thornfield' she could not stop. Being short-sighted to excess, she wrote in little square paper-books, held close to her eyes, and (the first copy) in pencil. On she went writing incessantly for three weeks; by which time she had carried her heroine away from Thornfield, and was herself in a fever which compelled her to pause.'

This is all, I believe, which can now be told respecting the conception and composition of this wonderful book, which was, however, only at its commencement when Miss

[1] Miss Harriet Martineau in the *Daily News*.

Brontë returned with her father to Haworth, after their anxious expedition to Manchester.

They arrived at home about the end of September. Mr. Brontë was daily gaining strength, but he was still forbidden to exercise his sight much. Things had gone on more comfortably while she was away than Charlotte had dared to hope, and she expresses herself thankful for the good ensured and the evil spared during her absence.

Soon after this some proposal, of which I have not been able to gain a clear account, was again mooted for Miss Brontë's opening a school at some place distant from Haworth. It elicited the following fragment of a characteristic reply :—

'Leave home! I shall neither be able to find place nor employment; perhaps, too, I shall be quite past the prime of life, my faculties will be rusted, and my few acquirements in a great measure forgotten. These ideas sting me keenly sometimes; but, whenever I consult my conscience, it affirms that I am doing right in staying at home, and bitter are its upbraidings when I yield to an eager desire for release. I could hardly expect success if I were to err against such warnings. I should like to hear from you again soon. Bring R—— to the point, and make him give you a clear, not a vague, account of what pupils he really could promise; people often think they can do great things in that way till they have tried; but getting pupils is unlike getting any other sort of goods.' [1]

[1] Mrs. Gaskell has somewhat abridged this letter, which in the original runs as follows :—

'I read your letter with attention, not on my own account, for any project which infers the necessity of my leaving home is impracticable to me. If I could leave home I should not be at Haworth now; I know life is passing away, and I am doing nothing, earning nothing. A very bitter knowledge it is at moments, but I see no way out of the mist. More than one very favourable opportunity has now offered, which I have been obliged to put aside. Probably when I am free to leave home I shall neither be able to find place nor employment; perhaps, too, I shall be quite past the prime of life, my faculties will be rusted, and my

Whatever might be the nature and extent of this negotiation, the end of it was that Charlotte adhered to the decision of her conscience, which bade her remain at home, as long as her presence could cheer or comfort those who were in distress, or had the slightest influence over him who was the cause of it. The next extract gives us a glimpse into the cares of that home. It is from a letter dated December 15.

'I hope you are not frozen up;[1] the cold here is dreadful. I do not remember such a series of North-Pole days. England might really have taken a slide up into the Arctic Zone; the sky looks like ice; the earth is frozen; the wind is as keen as a two-edged blade. We have all had severe colds and coughs in consequence of the weather. Poor Anne has suffered greatly from asthma, but is now, we are glad to say, rather better. She had two nights last week when her cough and difficulty of breathing were painful indeed to hear and witness, and must have been most distressing to suffer; she bore it, as she bears all affliction, without one complaint, only sighing now and then when nearly worn out. She has an extraordinary heroism of endurance. I admire, but I certainly could not imitate her.' . . . 'You say I am to "tell you

few acquirements in a great measure forgotten. These ideas sting me keenly sometimes, but whenever I consult my conscience it affirms that I am doing right in staying at home, and bitter are its upbraidings when I yield to an eager desire for release. I returned to Brussels after aunt's death against my conscience, prompted by what seemed then an irresistible impulse. I was punished for my selfish folly by a total hindrance for more than two years of happiness and peace of mind. I could hardly expect success were I to err again in the same way.'

It has been urged that this passage, in its suggestion of loss of 'peace of mind,' has reference to the writer's devotion to her professor, M. Héger, having been something more than the admiration of a pupil for an honoured instructor. Charlotte Brontë's friend Ellen Nussey, on the other hand, always declared that the reference was to her father having given way to drink during her second sojourn in Brussels. The point is unimportant.

[1] In the original letter to Ellen Nussey the words 'frozen up in Northamptonshire' occur.

plenty." What would you have me say? Nothing happens at Haworth; nothing, at least, of a pleasant kind. One little incident occurred about a week ago to sting us to life; but if it gives no more pleasure for you to hear than it does for us to witness, you will scarcely thank me for adverting to it. It was merely the arrival of a sheriff's officer on a visit to Branwell, inviting him either to pay his debts or take a trip to York. Of course his debts had to be paid. It is not agreeable to lose money, time after time, in this way; but where is the use of dwelling on such subjects? It will make him no better.'

'December 28.

'I feel as if it was almost a farce to sit down and write to you now, with nothing to say worth listening to; and indeed, if it were not for two reasons, I should put off the business at least a fortnight hence. The first reason is, I want another letter from you, for your letters are interesting, they have something in them, some results of experience and observation; one receives them with pleasure, and reads them with relish; and these letters I cannot expect to get, unless I reply to them. I wish the correspondence could be managed so as to be all on one side. The second reason is derived from a remark in your last, that you felt lonely, something as I was at Brussels,[1] and that consequently you had a peculiar desire to hear from old acquaintance. I can understand and sympathise with this. I remember the shortest note was a treat to me, when I was at the above-named place; therefore I write. I have also a third reason: it is a haunting terror lest you should imagine I forget you—that my regard cools with absence. It is not in my nature to forget your nature; though I dare say I should spit fire and explode sometimes if we lived together continually; and you, too, would get angry, and then we should get reconciled and jog on as before. Do you ever get dissatisfied with your own temper when you are long fixed to one place, in one scene, subject to one monotonous species of annoyance? I

[1] 'At Stonegappe and Brussels' in the original letter, which was addressed to Ellen Nussey.

do: I am now in that unenviable frame of mind; my humour, I think, is too soon overthrown, too sore, too demonstrative and vehement. I almost long for some of the uniform serenity you describe in Mrs. ——'s disposition; or, at least, I would fain have her power of self-control and concealment; but I would not take her artificial habits and ideas along with her composure. After all I should prefer being as I am. . . . You do right not to be annoyed at any maxims of conventionality you meet with. Regard all new ways in the light of fresh experience for you: if you see any honey, gather it.'[1] . . . 'I don't, after all, consider that we ought to despise everything we see in the world, merely because it is not what we are accustomed to. I suspect, on the contrary, that there are not unfrequently substantial reasons underneath for customs that appear to us absurd; and if I were ever again to find myself amongst strangers I should be solicitous to examine before I condemned. Indiscriminating irony and fault-finding are just *sumphishness*, and that is all. Anne is now much better, but papa has been for near a fortnight far from well with the influenza; he has at times a most distressing cough, and his spirits are much depressed.'

So ended the year 1846.

[1] 'See *Punch*' is the only omission here. The previous number of *Punch* (No. 241, vol. x. p. 91, February 21, 1846) had contained a paper entitled 'Little Fables for Little Politicians.' The second of these fables, entitled 'The Drones,' sets forth how 'a swarm of drones lived for a number of years in a rich beehive, helping themselves to the best of the honey, and contributing nothing to the store.' Finally, the drones —that is to say, the Protectionists—were driven out by the bees; and *Punch* implores 'our venerable Dukes to have the above little Fable read to them at least once a day.'

CHAPTER XVI

THE next year opened with a spell of cold, dreary weather, which told severely on a constitution already tried by anxiety and care. Miss Brontë describes herself as having utterly lost her appetite, and as looking 'grey, old, worn, and sunk,' from her sufferings during the inclement season. The cold brought on severe toothache; toothache was the cause of a succession of restless, miserable nights; and long wakefulness told acutely upon her nerves, making them feel with redoubled sensitiveness all the harass of her oppressive life. Yet she would not allow herself to lay her bad health to the charge of an uneasy mind; 'for after all,' said she at this time, 'I have many, many things to be thankful for.' But the real state of things may be gathered from the following extracts from her letters.

'March 1.

'Even at the risk of appearing very exacting I can't help saying that I should like a letter as long as your last, every time you write. Short notes give one the feeling of a very small piece of a very good thing to eat—they set the appetite on edge, and don't satisfy it—a letter leaves you more contented; and yet, after all, I am very glad to get notes; so don't think, when you are pinched for time and materials, that it is useless to write a few lines; be assured a few lines are very acceptable as far as they go; and though I like long letters I would by no means have you to make a task of writing them. . . . I really should like you to come to Haworth, before I again go to B(irstall). And it is natural and right that I should have this wish. To keep friendship in proper order the balance of good offices must be preserved;

otherwise a disquieting and anxious feeling creeps in, and destroys mutual comfort. In summer, and in fine weather, your visit here might be much better managed than in winter. We could go out more, be more independent of the house and of our room. Branwell has been conducting himself very badly lately. I expect, from the extravagance of his behaviour, and from mysterious hints he drops (for he never will speak out plainly), that we shall be hearing news of fresh debts contracted by him soon. My health is better: I lay the blame of its feebleness on the cold weather more than on an uneasy mind.'

'March 24, 1847.

'It is at Haworth, if all be well, that we must next see each other again. I owe you a grudge for giving Miss Wooler some very exaggerated account about my not being well, and setting her on to urge my leaving home as quite a duty. I'll take care not to tell you next time, when I think I am looking specially old and ugly; as if people could not have that privilege without being supposed to be at the last gasp! I shall be thirty-one next birthday. My youth is gone like a dream; and very little use have I ever made of it. What have I done these last thirty years? Precious little.'[1]

The quiet, sad year stole on. The sisters were contemplating near at hand, and for a long time, the terrible effects of talents misused and faculties abused in the person of that brother once their fond darling and dearest pride. They had to cheer the poor old father, in whose heart all trials sank the deeper, because of the silent stoicism of his endurance. They had to watch over his health, of which, whatever was its state, he seldom complained. They had to save, as much as they could, the precious remnants of his sight. They had to order the frugal household with increased care, so as to supply wants and expenditure utterly foreign to their self-denying natures. Though they shrank from overmuch contact with their fellow beings, for all whom they met

[1] Both the above letters were addressed to Ellen Nussey.

they had kind words, if few; and when kind actions were needed they were not spared, if the sisters at the Parsonage could render them. They visited the parish schools duly; and often were Charlotte's rare and brief holidays of a visit from home shortened by her sense of the necessity of being in her place at the Sunday school.

In the intervals of such a life as this 'Jane Eyre' was making progress. 'The Professor' was passing slowly and heavily from publisher to publisher. 'Wuthering Heights' and 'Agnes Grey' had been accepted by another publisher, 'on terms somewhat impoverishing to the two authors;' a bargain to be alluded to more fully hereafter. It[1] was lying in his hands, awaiting his pleasure for its passage through the press, during all the months of early summer.

The piece of external brightness to which the sisters looked during these same summer months was the hope that the friend to whom so many of Charlotte's letters are addressed, and who was her chosen companion, whenever circumstances permitted them to be together, as well as a favourite with Emily and Anne, would be able to pay them a visit at Haworth. Fine weather had come in May, Charlotte writes, and they hoped to make their visitor decently comfortable. Their brother was tolerably well, having got to the end of a considerable sum of money which he became possessed of in the spring, and therefore under the wholesome restriction of poverty. But Charlotte warns her friend that she must expect to find a change in his appearance, and that he is broken in mind; and ends her note of entreating invitation by saying, 'I pray for fine weather, that we may get out while you stay.'

At length the day was fixed.

'Friday will suit us very well. I *do* trust nothing will now arise to prevent your coming. I shall be anxious about the weather on that day; if it rains I shall cry. Don't expect me to meet you; where would be the good of it? I

[1] The two stories were published as if they were one book; see note, p. 347.

neither like to meet, nor to be met. Unless, indeed, you had a box or a basket for me to carry; then there would be some sense in it. Come in black, blue, pink, white, or scarlet, as you like. Come shabby or smart; neither the colour nor the condition signifies; provided only the dress contain Ellen, all will be right.'

But there came the first of a series of disappointments to be borne. One feels how sharp it must have been to have wrung out the following words:—

'May 20.

'Your letter of yesterday did indeed give me a cruel chill of disappointment. I cannot blame you, for I know it was not your fault. I do not altogether exempt —— from reproach. . . . This is bitter, but I feel bitter. As to going to B(irstall), I will not go near the place till you have been to Haworth. My respects to all and sundry, accompanied with a large amount of wormwood and gall, from the effusion of which you and your mother are alone excepted.—C. B.

'You are quite at liberty to tell what I think, if you judge proper. Though it is true I may be somewhat unjust, for I am deeply annoyed. I thought I had arranged your visit tolerably comfortable for you this time. I may find it more difficult on another occasion.'

I must give one sentence from a letter written about this time, as it shows distinctly the clear strong sense of the writer.

'I was amused by what she[1] says respecting her wish that, when she marries, her husband will, at least, have a will of his own, even should he be a tyrant. Tell her, when she forms that aspiration again, she must make it conditional: if her husband has a strong will, he must also have a strong sense, a kind heart, and a thoroughly correct notion of justice; because a man with a *weak brain* and a *strong will* is merely an intractable brute; you can have no hold of

[1] The reference is to a Miss Amelia Ringrose, who married Joseph Taylor, one of Mary Taylor's brothers.

him; you can never lead him right. A *tyrant* under any circumstances is a curse.'

Meanwhile 'The Professor' had met with many refusals from different publishers; some, I have reason to believe, not over-courteously worded in writing to an unknown author, and none alleging any distinct reasons for its rejection. Courtesy is always due; but it is, perhaps, hardly to be expected that, in the press of business in a great publishing house, they should find time to explain why they decline particular works. Yet, though one course of action is not to be wondered at, the opposite may fall upon a grieved and disappointed mind with all the graciousness of dew; and I can well sympathise with the published account which 'Currer Bell' gives of the feelings experienced on reading Messrs. Smith, Elder, & Co.'s letter containing the rejection of 'The Professor.'

'As a forlorn hope we tried one publishing house more. Ere long, in a much shorter space than that on which experience had taught him to calculate, there came a letter, which he opened in the dreary anticipation of finding two hard, hopeless lines, intimating that "Messrs. Smith, Elder, & Co. were not disposed to publish the MS.," and, instead, he took out of the envelope a letter of two pages. He read it trembling. It declined, indeed, to publish that tale for business reasons, but it discussed its merits and demerits so courteously, so considerately, in a spirit so rational, with a discrimination so enlightened, that this very refusal cheered the author better than a vulgarly expressed acceptance would have done. It was added that a work in three volumes would meet with careful attention.'

Mr. Smith has told me a little circumstance connected with the reception of this manuscript, which seems to me indicative of no ordinary character. It came (accompanied by the note given below) in a brown paper parcel to 65 Cornhill. Besides the address to Messrs. Smith, Elder, & Co. there were on it those of other publishers to whom the tale had been sent, not obliterated, but simply scored through,

so that Mr. Smith at once perceived the names of some of the houses in the trade to which the unlucky parcel had gone without success.

TO MESSRS. SMITH AND ELDER.

'July 15, 1847.

'Gentlemen,—I beg to submit to your consideration the accompanying manuscript. I should be glad to learn whether it be such as you approve, and would undertake to publish at as early a period as possible. Address, Mr. Currer Bell, under cover to Miss Brontë, Haworth, Bradford, Yorkshire.'

Some time elapsed before an answer was returned.

A little circumstance may be mentioned here, though it belongs to a somewhat earlier period, as showing Miss Brontë's inexperience of the ways of the world, and willing deference to the opinion of others. She had written to a publisher about one of her manuscripts, which she had sent him, and, not receiving any reply, she consulted her brother as to what could be the reason for the prolonged silence. He at once set it down to her not having enclosed a postage-stamp in her letter. She accordingly wrote again, to repair her former omission, and apologise for it.

TO MESSRS. SMITH AND ELDER.

'August 2, 1847.

'Gentlemen,—About three weeks since I sent for your consideration a MS. entitled "The Professor, a tale by Currer Bell." I should be glad to know whether it reached your hands safely, and likewise to learn, at your earliest convenience, whether it be such as you can undertake to publish.—I am, Gentlemen, yours respectfully, CURRER BELL.

'I enclose a directed cover for your reply.'

This time her note met with a prompt answer; for, four days later, she writes (in reply to the letter which she afterwards characterised in the Preface to the second edition of 'Wuthering Heights' as containing a refusal so delicate,

reasonable, and courteous as to be more cheering than some acceptances)—

'Your objection to the want of varied interest in the tale is, I am aware, not without grounds; yet it appears to me that it might be published without serious risk, if its appearance were speedily followed up by another work from the same pen, of a more striking and exciting character. The first work might serve as an introduction, and accustom the public to the author's name; the success of the second might thereby be rendered more probable. I have a second narrative in three volumes, now in progress, and nearly completed, to which I have endeavoured to impart a more vivid interest than belongs to "The Professor." In about a month I hope to finish it, so that if a publisher were found for "The Professor" the second narrative might follow as soon as was deemed advisable; and thus the interest of the public (if any interest was aroused) might not be suffered to cool. Will you be kind enough to favour me with your judgment on this plan?'

While the minds of the three sisters were in this state of suspense their long-expected friend came to pay her promised visit. She was with them at the beginning of the glowing August of that year. They were out on the moors for the greater part of the day, basking in the golden sunshine, which was bringing on an unusual plenteousness of harvest, for which, somewhat later, Charlotte expressed her earnest desire that there should be a thanksgiving service in all the churches. August was the season of glory for the neighbourhood of Haworth. Even the smoke, lying in the valley between that village and Keighley, took beauty from the radiant colours on the moors above, the rich purple of the heather bloom calling out an harmonious contrast in the tawny golden light that, in the full heat of summer evenings, comes stealing everywhere through the dun atmosphere of the hollows. And up on the moors, turning away from all habitations of men, the royal ground on which they stood would expand into long swells of amethyst-tinted hills,

HAWORTH MOOR, SHOWING CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S CHAIR.

melting away into aërial tints; and the fresh and fragrant scent of the heather, and the 'murmur of innumerable bees,' would lend a poignancy to the relish with which they welcomed their friend to their own true home on the wild and open hills.

There, too, they could escape from the Shadow in the house below.

Throughout this time—during all these confidences—not a word was uttered to their friend of the three tales in London—two accepted and in the press, one trembling in the balance of a publisher's judgment—nor did she hear of that other story 'nearly completed,' lying in manuscript in the grey old parsonage down below. She might have her suspicions that they all wrote with an intention of publication some time; but she knew the bounds which they set to themselves in their communications; nor could she, nor any one else, wonder at their reticence, when remembering how scheme after scheme had failed, just as it seemed close upon accomplishment.

Mr. Brontë, too, had his suspicions of something going on; but, never being spoken to, he did not speak on the subject, and consequently his ideas were vague and uncertain, only just prophetic enough to keep him from being actually stunned when, later on, he heard of the success of 'Jane Eyre,' to the progress of which we must now return.

TO MESSRS. SMITH AND ELDER.

'August 24.

'I now send you per rail a MS. entitled "Jane Eyre," a novel in three volumes, by Currer Bell. I find I cannot prepay the carriage of the parcel, as money for that purpose is not received at the small station-house where it is left. If, when you acknowledge the receipt of the MS., you would have the goodness to mention the amount charged on delivery, I will immediately transmit it in postage-stamps. It is better in future to address Mr. Currer Bell, under cover to Miss Brontë, Haworth, Bradford, Yorkshire, as there is a

risk of letters otherwise directed not reaching me at present. To save trouble, I enclose an envelope.' [1]

'Jane Eyre' was accepted, and printed and published by October 16.[2]

While it was in the press Miss Brontë went to pay a short visit to her friend at B(rookroyd). The proofs were forwarded to her there, and she occasionally sat at the same table with her friend, correcting them; but they did not exchange a word on the subject.

Immediately on her return to the Parsonage she wrote —

'September.

'I had a very wet, windy walk home from Keighley; but

[1] The letters of Charlotte Brontë are now mainly contained in Mrs. Gaskell's biography and *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle*. Conditions of space would have made it impracticable, even were it otherwise desirable, to incorporate all Miss Brontë's letters in the notes to this volume. Through the courtesy of Mr. George Smith, of Messrs. Smith, Elder, & Co., I am enabled, however, to add a number of hitherto unpublished letters to Mrs. Gaskell's narrative, of which one dated September 24 comes first in chronological order :—

TO SMITH, ELDER, AND CO.

'Gentlemen,—I have to thank you for punctuating the sheets before sending them to me, as I found the task very puzzling, and, besides, I consider your mode of punctuation a great deal more correct and rational than my own. I am glad you think pretty well of the first part of *Jane Eyre*, and I trust, both for your sakes and my own, the public may think pretty well of it too.

'Henceforth I hope I shall be able to return the sheets promptly and regularly.—I am, Gentlemen, yours respectfully, C. Bell.'

On September 29 she wrote again—

'Gentlemen,—I trust you will be able to get *Jane Eyre* out next month. Have the goodness to continue to send the sheets of the third vol. along with those of the second.

'I again thank you for your attention in punctuating the sheets.—I am, Gentlemen, yours respectfully, C. Bell.'

[2] It was in three volumes, and the title-page ran as follows :—

'*Jane Eyre : an Autobiography. Edited by Currer Bell. In Three Volumes. London : Smith, Elder & Co., Cornhill.* 1847.'

my fatigue quite disappeared when I reached home, and found all well. Thank God for it.

'My boxes came safe this morning. I have distributed the presents. Papa says I am to remember him most kindly to you. The screen will be very useful, and he thanks you for it. Tabby was charmed with her cap. She said "she never thought o' naught o' t' sort as Miss sending her aught, and, she is sure, she can never thank her enough for it." I was infuriated on finding a jar in my trunk. At first I hoped it was empty, but when I found it heavy and replete, I could have hurled it all the way back to B(irstall). However the inscription A. B. softened me much. It was at once kind and villanous in you to send it. You ought first to be tenderly kissed, and then afterwards as tenderly whipped. Emily is just now on the floor of the bedroom where I am writing, looking at her apples. She smiled when I gave the collar to her as your present, with an expression at once well pleased and slightly surprised. All send their love.—Yours in a mixture of anger and love.'

When the manuscript of 'Jane Eyre' had been received by the future publishers of that remarkable novel, it fell to the share of a gentleman connected with the firm to read it first.[1] He was so powerfully struck by the character of the tale that he reported his impression in very strong terms to Mr. Smith, who appears to have been much amused by the admiration excited. 'You seem to have been so enchanted that I do not know how to believe you,' he laughingly said. But when a second reader, in the person of a clear-headed Scotchman,[2] not given to enthusiasm, had taken the manu-

[1] Mr. William Smith Williams (1800–1875) was the literary adviser to the firm of Smith, Elder, & Co. for many years. From this time forward he became a regular correspondent of Miss Brontë, and the most interesting letters that she wrote—of those that have been preserved—are addressed to him. This was partially due to the fact that he lent her books with considerable regularity, and thus provoked comment upon her reading.

[2] The 'clear-headed Scotchman' was Mr. James Taylor, who held a position of considerable responsibility in the firm of Smith, Elder, & Co., and whose name we meet many times in later pages. See note, p. 509.

script home in the evening, and became so deeply interested in it as to sit up half the night to finish it, Mr. Smith's curiosity was sufficiently excited to prompt him to read it for himself; and great as were the praises which had been bestowed upon it, he found that they had not exceeded the truth.[1]

On its publication copies were presented to a few private literary friends. Their discernment had been rightly reckoned upon. They were of considerable standing in the world of letters; and one and all returned expressions of high praise along with their thanks for the book. Among them was the great writer of fiction for whom Miss Brontë felt so strong an admiration;[2] he immediately appreciated and, in a characteristic note to the publishers, acknowledged its extraordinary merits.

The Reviews were more tardy, or more cautious. The 'Athenæum' and the 'Spectator' gave short notices, containing qualified admissions of the power of the author. The 'Literary Gazette' was uncertain as to whether it was safe to praise an unknown author. The 'Daily News' declined accepting the copy which had been sent, on the score of a rule 'never to review novels;' but a little later on there appeared a notice of the 'Bachelor of the Albany' in that paper; and Messrs. Smith, Elder, & Co. again forwarded a copy of 'Jane Eyre' to the editor, with a request for a notice. This time the work was accepted; but I am not aware what was the character of the article upon it.[3]

[1] 'There will be no preface to *Jane Eyre*,' Miss Brontë writes to Smith, Elder, & Co. on October 29. 'If you send me six copies of the work they will be amply sufficient, and I shall be obliged to you for them.'

[2] Thackeray.

[3] The magazines were sufficiently generous of praise. The second edition of *Jane Eyre*, published in 1848, contains seven pages of 'opinions of the press.' 'Decidedly the best novel of the season' was the comment of the *Westminster Review*. 'Almost all that we require in a novelist the writer has—perception of character and power of delineating it, picturesqueness, passion, and knowledge of life,' was Mr. George Henry Lewes's estimate in *Fraser*.

The 'Examiner' came forward to the rescue, as far as the opinions of professional critics were concerned. The literary articles in that paper were always remarkable for their genial and generous appreciation of merit; nor was the notice of 'Jane Eyre' an exception; it was full of hearty yet delicate and discriminating praise. Otherwise the press in general did little to promote the sale of the novel; the demand for it among librarians had begun before the appearance of the review in the 'Examiner;' the power and fascination of the tale itself made its merits known to the public without the kindly finger-posts of professional criticism; and early in December the rush began for copies.

I will insert two or three of Miss Brontë's letters to her publishers, in order to show how timidly the idea of success was received by one so unaccustomed to adopt a sanguine view of any subject in which she was individually concerned. The occasions on which these notes were written will explain themselves.[1]

[1] Almost simultaneously she was writing to Mr. Smith Williams, as the following letter indicates:—

'October 4, 1847.

'Dear Sir,—I thank you sincerely for your last letter. It is valuable to me because it furnishes me with a sound opinion on points respecting which I desired to be advised; be assured I shall do what I can to profit by your wise and good counsel.

'Permit me, however, Sir, to caution you against forming too favourable an idea of my powers, or too sanguine an expectation of what they can achieve. I am myself sensible both of deficiencies of capacity and disadvantages of circumstance which will, I fear, render it somewhat difficult for me to attain popularity as an author. The eminent writers you mention—Mr. Thackeray, Mr. Dickens, Mrs. Marsh, &c.—doubtless enjoyed facilities for observation such as I have not; certainly they possess a knowledge of the world, whether intuitive or acquired, such as I can lay no claim to, and this gives their writings an importance and a variety greatly beyond what I can offer the public.

'Still, if health be spared and time vouchsafed me, I mean to do my best; and should a moderate success crown my efforts its value will be greatly enhanced by the proof it will seem to give that your kind counsel and encouragement have not been bestowed on one quite unworthy.—Yours respectfully, C. Bell.'

TO MESSRS. SMITH, ELDER, AND CO.

'October 19, 1847.

'Gentlemen,—The six copies of "Jane Eyre" reached me this morning. You have given the work every advantage which good paper, clear type, and a seemly outside can supply: if it fails the fault will lie with the author; you are exempt.

'I now await the judgment of the press and the public.—I am, Gentlemen, yours respectfully, C. BELL.'

TO MESSRS. SMITH, ELDER, AND CO.

'October 26, 1847.

'Gentlemen,—I have received the newspapers. They speak quite as favourably of "Jane Eyre" as I expected them to do. The notice in the "Literary Gazette" seems certainly to have been indited in rather a flat mood, and the "Athenæum" has a style of its own, which I respect, but cannot exactly relish; still, when one considers that journals of that standing have a dignity to maintain which would be deranged by a too cordial recognition of the claims of an obscure author, I suppose there is every reason to be satisfied.

'Meantime a brisk sale would be effectual support under the *hauteur* of lofty critics.—I am, Gentlemen, yours respectfully, C. BELL.'

TO MESSRS. SMITH, ELDER, AND CO.

'Nov. 13, 1847.

'Gentlemen,—I have to acknowledge the receipt of yours of the 11th inst., and to thank you for the information it communicates. The notice from the "People's Journal" also duly reached me, and this morning I received the "Spectator." The critique in the "Spectator" gives that view of the book which will naturally be taken by a certain class of minds;[1] I shall expect it to be followed by other

[1] 'The book,' said the *Spectator*, 'displays considerable skill in the

notices of a similar nature. The way to detraction has been pointed out, and will probably be pursued. Most future notices will in all likelihood have a reflection of the "Spectator" in them. I fear this turn of opinion will not improve the demand for the book—but time will show. If "Jane Eyre" has any solid worth in it, it ought to weather a gust of unfavourable wind.—I am, Gentlemen, yours respectfully, C. Bell.'[1]

TO MESSRS. SMITH, ELDER, AND CO.

'Nov. 30, 1847.

'Gentlemen,—I have received the "Economist," but not the "Examiner;" from some cause that paper has missed, as the "Spectator" did on a former occasion; I am glad, however, to learn through your letter that its notice of "Jane Eyre" was favourable, and also that the prospects of the work appear to improve.

'I am obliged to you for the information respecting "Wuthering Heights."—I am, Gentlemen, yours respectfully,

'C. Bell.'

TO MESSRS. SMITH, ELDER, AND CO.

'Dec. 1, 1847.

'Gentlemen,—The "Examiner" reached me to-day: it had been missent on account of the direction, which was to Currer Bell, care of Miss Brontë. Allow me to intimate that it would be better in future not to put the name of Currer Bell on the outside of communications; if directed simply

plan, and great power, but rather shown in the writing than in the matter; and its vigour sustains a species of interest to the last.'

[1] On November 27 Miss Brontë writes to Mr. W. Smith Williams—

'Dear Sir,—Will you have the goodness in future to direct all communications to me to Haworth, near *Keighley*, instead of to *Bradford*? With this address they will, owing to alterations in local post-office arrangements, reach me a day earlier than if sent by Bradford. I have received this week the *Glasgow Examiner*, the *Bath Herald*, and *Douglas Jerrold's Newspaper*. The *Examiner*, it appears, has not yet given a notice.—I am, dear Sir, yours respectfully, C. Bell.'

to Miss Brontë they will be more likely to reach their destination safely. Currer Bell is not known in the district, and I have no wish that he should become known. The notice in the "Examiner" gratified me very much; it appears to be from the pen of an able man who has understood what he undertakes to criticise; of course approbation from such a quarter is encouraging to an author, and I trust it will prove beneficial to the work.—I am, Gentlemen, yours respectfully, C. Bell.

'I received likewise seven other notices from provincial papers enclosed in an envelope. I thank you very sincerely for so punctually sending me all the various criticisms on "Jane Eyre."'

TO MESSRS. SMITH, ELDER, AND CO.

'Dec. 10, 1847.

'Gentlemen,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter enclosing a bank post bill, for which I thank you. Having already expressed my sense of your kind and upright conduct, I can now only say that I trust you will always have reason to be as well content with me as I am with you. If the result of any future exertions I may be able to make should prove agreeable and advantageous to you, I shall be well satisfied; and it would be a serious source of regret to me if I thought you ever had reason to repent being my publishers.

'You need not apologise, gentlemen, for having written to me so seldom; of course I am always glad to hear from you, but I am truly glad to hear from Mr. Williams likewise; he was my first favourable critic; he first gave me encouragement to persevere as an author, consequently I naturally respect him and feel grateful to him.

'Excuse the informality of my letter, and believe me, gentlemen, yours respectfully, Currer Bell.'

There is little record remaining of the manner in which

the first news of its wonderful success reached and affected the one heart of the three sisters.[1] I once asked Charlotte—we were talking about the description of Lowood School, and she was saying that she was not sure whether she should have written it if she had been aware how instantaneously it would have been identified with Cowan Bridge[2]—whether the popularity to which the novel attained had taken her by surprise. She hesitated a little, and then said, 'I believed that what had impressed me so forcibly when I wrote it must make a strong impression on any one who read it. I

[1] Another letter of this period, hitherto unpublished, may be given here. The reference is, of course, to Leigh Hunt's *Jar of Honey from Mount Hybla*, of which an early copy of the first edition must have been sent to Miss Brontë. The book was first published in 1848 :-

TO MESSRS. SMITH, ELDER, AND CO.

'December 25, 1847.

'Gentlemen,—Permit me to thank you for your present, which reached me yesterday. I was not prepared for anything so truly tasteful, and when I had opened the parcel, removed the various envelopes, and at last got a glimpse of the chastely attractive binding, I was most agreeably surprised. What is better, on examination I find the contents fully to answer the expectation excited by the charming exterior; the *Honey* is quite as choice as the *Jar* is elegant. The illustrations too are very beautiful, some of them peculiarly so. I trust the public will show itself grateful for the pains you have taken to provide a book so appropriate to the season. C. Bell.'

[2] '*Jane Eyre* has got down into Yorkshire,' writes Miss Brontë to Mr. Williams under date January 4, 1848; 'a copy has even penetrated into this neighbourhood. I saw an elderly clergyman reading it the other day, and had the satisfaction of hearing him exclaim, "Why, they have got —— School, and Mr. —— here, I declare! and Miss ——" (naming the originals of Lowood, Mr. Brocklehurst and Miss Temple). He had known them all. I wondered whether he would recognise the portraits, and was gratified to find that he did, and that, moreover, he pronounced them faithful and just. He said, too, that Mr. —— (Brocklehurst) "deserved the chastisement he had got."

'He did not recognise Currer Bell. What author would be without the advantage of being able to walk invisible? One is thereby enabled to keep such a quiet mind. I make this small observation in confidence.'

was not surprised at those who read "Jane Eyre" being deeply interested in it; but I hardly expected that a book by an unknown author could find readers.'

The sisters had kept the knowledge of their literary ventures from their father, fearing to increase their own anxieties and disappointment by witnessing his; for he took an acute interest in all that befell his children, and his own tendency had been towards literature in the days when he was young and hopeful. It was true he did not much manifest his feelings in words; he would have thought that he was prepared for disappointment as the lot of man, and that he could have met it with stoicism; but words are poor and tardy interpreters of feelings to those who love one another, and his daughters knew how he would have borne ill-success worse for them than for himself. So they did not tell him what they were undertaking. He says now that he suspected it all along, but his suspicions could take no exact form, as all he was certain of was that his children were perpetually writing—and not writing letters. We have seen how the communications from their publishers were received 'under cover to Miss Brontë.' Once, Charlotte told me, they overheard the postman meeting Mr. Brontë, as the latter was leaving the house, and inquiring from the parson where one Currer Bell could be living, to which Mr. Brontë replied that there was no such person in the parish. This must have been the misadventure to which Miss Brontë alludes in the beginning of her correspondence with Mr. Aylott.

Now, however, when the demand for the work had assured success to 'Jane Eyre,' her sisters urged Charlotte to tell their father of its publication. She accordingly went into his study one afternoon after his early dinner, carrying with her a copy of the book, and two or three reviews, taking care to include a notice adverse to it.

She informed me that something like the following conversation took place between her and him. (I wrote down her words the day after I heard them, and I am pretty sure they are quite accurate.)

'Papa, I've been writing a book.'

'Have you, my dear?'

'Yes; and I want you to read it.'

'I am afraid it will try my eyes too much.'

'But it is not in manuscript; it is printed.'

'My dear! you've never thought of the expense it will be! It will be almost sure to be a loss; for how can you get a book sold? No one knows you or your name.'

'But, papa, I don't think it will be a loss; no more will you, if you will just let me read you a review or two, and tell you more about it.'

So she sat down and read some of the reviews to her father; and then, giving him the copy of 'Jane Eyre' that she intended for him, she left him to read it. When he came in to tea he said, 'Girls, do you know Charlotte has been writing a book, and it is much better than likely?'

But while the existence of Currer Bell, the author, was like a piece of a dream to the quiet inhabitants of Haworth Parsonage, who went on with their uniform household life, their cares for their brother being its only variety—the whole reading world of England was in a ferment to discover the unknown author. Even the publishers of 'Jane Eyre' were ignorant whether Currer Bell was a real or an assumed name, whether it belonged to a man or a woman. In every town people sought out the list of their friends and acquaintances, and turned away in disappointment. No one they knew had genius enough to be the author. Every little incident mentioned in the book was turned this way and that to answer, if possible, the much-vexed question of sex. All in vain. People were content to relax their exertions to satisfy their curiosity, and simply to sit down and greatly admire.

I am not going to write an analysis of a book with which every one who reads this biography is sure to be acquainted; much less a criticism upon a work which the great flood of public opinion has lifted up from the obscurity in which it first appeared, and laid high and safe on the everlasting hills of fame.

Before me lies a packet of extracts from newspapers and periodicals, which Mr. Brontë has sent me. It is touching to look them over, and see how there is hardly any notice, however short and clumsily worded, in any obscure provincial paper, but what has been cut out and carefully ticketed with its date by the poor bereaved father—so proud when he first read them, so desolate now. For one and all are full of praise of this great unknown genius, which suddenly appeared amongst us. Conjecture as to the authorship ran about like wild-fire. People in London, smooth and polished as the Athenians of old, and, like them, 'spending their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing,' were astonished and delighted to find that a fresh sensation, a new pleasure, was in reserve for them in the uprising of an author capable of depicting with accurate and Titanic power the strong, self-reliant, racy, and individual characters which were not, after all, extinct species, but lingered still in existence in the North. They thought that there was some exaggeration mixed with the peculiar force of delineation. Those nearer to the spot, where the scene of the story was apparently laid, were sure, from the very truth and accuracy of the writing, that the writer was no Southron; for though 'dark, and cold, and rugged is the North,' the old strength of the Scandinavian races yet abides there, and glowed out in every character depicted in 'Jane Eyre.' Further than this curiosity, both honourable and dishonourable, was at fault.

When the second edition appeared, in the January of the following year, with the dedication to Mr. Thackeray, people looked at each other and wondered afresh. But Currer Bell knew no more of William Makepeace Thackeray as an individual man—of his life, age, fortunes, or circumstances—than she did of those of Mr. Michael Angelo Titmarsh.[1]

[1] Thackeray sent *Vanity Fair* and *Esmond* to Miss Brontë, the first 'With the grateful regards of W. M. Thackeray, July 18, 1848,' the second inscribed, 'Miss Brontë, with W. M. Thackeray's grateful regards, October 28, 1852.' On October 28, 1847, Miss Brontë writes to Mr. Smith Williams, 'I feel honoured in being approved by Mr. Thackeray, because I approve Mr. Thackeray. This may sound presumptuous perhaps, but

The one had placed his name as author upon the title-page of 'Vanity Fair,' the other had not. She was thankful for the opportunity of expressing her high admiration of a writer whom, as she says, she regarded 'as the social regenerator of his day—as the very master of that working corps who would restore to rectitude the warped state of things. . . . His wit is bright, his humour attractive, but both bear the same relation to his serious genius that the mere lambent sheet-lightning, playing under the edge of the summer cloud, does to the electric death-spark hid in its womb.'

Anne Brontë had been more than usually delicate all the summer, and her sensitive spirit had been deeply affected by the great anxiety of her home. But now that 'Jane Eyre' gave such indications of success Charlotte began to plan schemes of future pleasure—perhaps relaxation from care would be the more correct expression—for their darling younger sister, the 'little one' of the household. But, although Anne was cheered for a time by Charlotte's success, the fact was that neither her spirits nor her bodily strength were such as to incline her to much active exertion, and she led far too sedentary a life, continually stooping either over her book, or work, or at her desk. 'It is with difficulty,' writes her sister, 'that we can prevail upon her to take a walk, or induce her to converse. I look forward to next summer with the confident intention that she shall, if possible, make at least a brief sojourn at the seaside.' In this same letter is a sentence telling how dearly home, even with its present terrible drawback, lay at the roots of her heart; but it is too much blended with reference to the affairs of others to bear quotation.

Any author of a successful novel is liable to an inroad of

I mean that I have long recognised in his writings genuine talent, such as I admired, such as I wondered at and delighted in. No author seems to distinguish so exquisitely as he does dross from ore, the real from the counterfeit. I believed too he had deep and true feelings under his seeming sternness. Now I am sure he has. One good word from such a man is worth pages of praise from ordinary judges.'

letters from unknown readers, containing commendation—sometimes of so fulsome and indiscriminating a character as to remind the recipient of Dr. Johnson's famous speech to one who offered presumptuous and injudicious praise—sometimes saying merely a few words, which have power to stir the heart 'as with the sound of a trumpet,' and in the high humility they excite to call forth strong resolutions to make all future efforts worthy of such praise; and occasionally containing that true appreciation of both merits and demerits, together with the sources of each, which forms the very criticism and help for which an inexperienced writer thirsts. Of each of these kinds of communication Currer Bell received her full share; and her warm heart, and true sense and high standard of what she aimed at, affixed to each its proper value. Among other letters of hers some to Mr. G. H. Lewes[1] have been kindly placed by him at my service; and, as I know Miss Brontë highly prized his letters of encouragement and advice, I shall give extracts from her replies, as their dates occur, because they will indicate the kind of criticism she valued, and also because throughout, in anger as in agreement and harmony, they show her character, unblinded by any self-flattery, full of clear-sighted modesty as to what she really did well, and what she failed in, grateful for friendly interest, and only sore and irritable when the question of sex in authorship was, as she thought, roughly or unfairly treated. As to the rest, the letters speak for themselves, to those who know how to listen, far better than I can interpret their meaning into my poorer and weaker words. Mr. Lewes has politely sent me the following explanation of that letter of his to which the succeeding one of Miss Brontë is a reply:—

'When "Jane Eyre" first appeared, the publishers

[1] George Henry Lewes (1817–1878). Published *Biographical History of Philosophy*, 1845–6; *Ranthorpe*, 1847; *Rose, Blanche and Violet*, 1848; *Life of Goethe*, 1855; *Problems of Life and Mind*, 1873–79, and many other works.

courteously sent me a copy. The enthusiasm with which I read it made me go down to Mr. Parker, and propose to write a review of it for "Fraser's Magazine." He would not consent to an unknown novel—for the papers had not yet declared themselves—receiving such importance, but thought it might make one on "Recent Novels: English and French," which appeared in "Fraser," December 1847. Meanwhile I had written to Miss Brontë to tell her the delight with which her book filled me; and seem to have "sermonised" her, to judge from her reply.'

TO G. H. LEWES, ESQ.

'November 6, 1847.

'Dear Sir,—Your letter reached me yesterday. I beg to assure you that I appreciate fully the intention with which it was written, and I thank you sincerely both for its cheering commendation and valuable advice.

'You warn me to beware of melodrama, and you exhort me to adhere to the real. When I first began to write, so impressed was I with the truth of the principles you advocate, that I determined to take Nature and Truth as my sole guides, and to follow to their very footprints; I restrained imagination, eschewed romance, repressed excitement; over-bright colouring, too, I avoided, and sought to produce something which should be soft, grave, and true.

'My work (a tale in one volume) being completed, I offered it to a publisher. He said it was original, faithful to nature, but he did not feel warranted in accepting it; such a work would not sell. I tried six publishers in succession; they all told me it was deficient in "startling incident" and "thrilling excitement," that it would never suit the circulating libraries, and as it was on those libraries the success of works of fiction mainly depended, they could not undertake to publish what would be overlooked there.

'"Jane Eyre" was rather objected to at first, on the same grounds, but finally found acceptance.

'I mention this to you, not with a view of pleading exemption from censure, but in order to direct your attention to the root of certain literary evils. If, in your forthcoming article in "Fraser," you would bestow a few words of enlightenment on the public who support the circulating libraries, you might, with your powers, do some good.

'You advise me, too, not to stray far from the ground of experience, as I become weak when I enter the region of fiction; and you say "real experience is perennially interesting, and to all men."

'I feel that this also is true; but, dear sir, is not the real experience of each individual very limited? And, if a writer dwells upon that solely or principally, is he not in danger of repeating himself, and also of becoming an egotist? Then, too, imagination is a strong, restless faculty, which claims to be heard and exercised: are we to be quite deaf to her cry, and insensate to her struggles? When she shows us bright pictures, are we never to look at them, and try to reproduce them? And when she is eloquent, and speaks rapidly and urgently in our ear, are we not to write to her dictation?

'I shall anxiously search the next number of "Fraser" for your opinions on these points. Believe me, dear Sir, yours gratefully, C. Bell.'

But while gratified by appreciation as an author she was cautious as to the person from whom she received it; for much of the value of the praise depended on the sincerity and capability of the person rendering it. Accordingly she applied to Mr. Williams (a gentleman connected with her publishers' firm) for information as to who and what Mr. Lewes was. Her reply, after she had learnt something of the character of her future critic, and while awaiting his criticism, must not be omitted. Besides the reference to him it contains some amusing allusions to the perplexity which began to be excited respecting the 'identity of the brothers Bell,' and some notice of the conduct of another publisher towards her

sister, which I refrain from characterising, because I understand that truth is considered a libel in speaking of such people.

TO W. S. WILLIAMS, ESQ

'November 10, 1847.

'Dear Sir,—I have received the "Britannia" and the "Sun," but not the "Spectator," which I rather regret, as censure, though not pleasant, is often wholesome.

'Thank you for your information regarding Mr. Lewes. I am glad to hear that he is a clever and sincere man: such being the case, I can await his critical sentence with fortitude; even if it goes against me I shall not murmur; ability and honesty have a right to condemn, where they think condemnation is deserved. From what you say, however, I trust rather to obtain at least a modified approval.

'Your account of the various surmises respecting the identity of the brothers Bell amused me much: were the enigma solved it would probably be found not worth the trouble of solution; but I will let it alone: it suits ourselves to remain quiet, and certainly injures no one else.

'The reviewer who noticed the little book of poems, in the "Dublin Magazine," conjectured that the *soi-disant* three personages were in reality but one, who, endowed with an unduly prominent organ of self-esteem, and consequently impressed with a somewhat weighty notion of his own merits, thought them too vast to be concentrated in a single individual, and accordingly divided himself into three, out of consideration, I suppose, for the nerves of the much-to-be-astounded public! This was an ingenious thought in the reviewer—very original and striking, but not accurate. We are three.

'A prose work, by Ellis and Acton, will soon appear: it should have been out, indeed, long since; for the first proof sheets were already in the press at the commencement of last August, before Currer Bell had placed the MS. of "Jane Eyre" in your hands. Mr. Newby, however, does not do

business like Messrs. Smith and Elder; a different spirit seems to preside at Mortimer Street to that which guides the helm at 65 Cornhill. . . . My relations have suffered from exhausting delay and procrastination, while I have to acknowledge the benefits of a management at once business-like and gentleman-like, energetic and considerate.

'I should like to know if Mr. Newby [1] often acts as he has done to my relations, or whether this is an exceptional instance of his method. Do you know, and can you tell me anything about him? You must excuse me for going to the point at once, when I want to learn anything: if my questions are impertinent you are, of course, at liberty to decline answering them.—I am yours respectfully, C. Bell.'

TO G. H. LEWES, ESQ.

'November 22, 1847.

'Dear Sir,—I have now read "Ranthorpe." I could not get it till a day or two ago; but I have got it and read it at last; and in reading "Ranthorpe" I have read a new book—not a reprint—not a reflection of any other book, but a *new book*.

'I did not know such books were written now. It is very different to any of the popular works of fiction: it fills the mind with fresh knowledge. Your experience and your convictions are made the reader's; and to an author, at least, they have a value and an interest quite unusual. I await your criticism on "Jane Eyre" now with other sentiments than I entertained before the perusal of "Ranthorpe."

'You were a stranger to me. I did not particularly

[1] Thomas Cautley Newby carried on business as a publisher, first at 72 Mortimer Street, Cavendish Square, whence the Brontë books were issued, and afterwards, from 1850 to 1874, at 30 Welbeck Street. Mrs. Riddell, the novelist, has described Mr. Newby as 'a spare man of middle height, who used to "travel" round to the country libraries.' 'He did not,' she says, 'stand well as a publisher. One of his brothers said to me, "Were I you, I should not say that Newby had published anything for me."' It is not the least humorous aspect of Newby's mysterious career that Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* shocked him greatly.

respect you. I did not feel that your praise or blame would have any special weight. I knew little of your right to condemn or approve. *Now* I am informed on these points.

'You will be severe; your last letter taught me as much. Well! I shall try to extract good out of your severity; and besides, though I am now sure you are a just, discriminating man, yet, being mortal, you must be fallible; and if any part of your censure galls me too keenly to the quick—gives me deadly pain—I shall for the present disbelieve it, and put it quite aside, till such time as I feel able to receive it without torture.—I am, dear Sir, yours very respectfully,

'C. Bell.'

In December 1847 'Wuthering Heights' and 'Agnes Grey' appeared.[1] The first named of these stories has revolted many readers by the power with which wicked and exceptional characters are depicted. Others, again, have felt the attraction of remarkable genius, even when displayed on grim and terrible criminals. Miss Brontë herself says, with regard to this tale, 'Where delineation of human character is concerned the case is different. I am bound to avow that she had scarcely more practical knowledge of the peasantry amongst whom she lived than a nun has of the country people that pass her convent gates. My sister's disposition was not naturally gregarious: circumstances favoured and fostered her tendency to seclusion; except to go to church, or to take a walk on the hills, she rarely crossed the threshold of home. Though her feeling for the people round her was benevolent, intercourse with them she never sought, nor, with very few exceptions, ever experienced; and yet she knew them, knew their ways, their language,

[1] The book containing *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* was in three volumes. The title-pages ran as follows:—

'*Wuthering Heights: a Novel. By Ellis Bell. Vol. I.* (*Vol. II.*) *London: Thomas Cautley Newby, Publisher,* 72 *Mortimer St., Cavendish Sq.* 1847.' '*Agnes Grey: a Novel. By Acton Bell. Vol. III. London: Thomas Cautley Newby,* 72 *Mortimer St., Cavendish Sq.* 1847.'

their family histories; she could hear of them with interest, and talk of them with detail, minute, graphic, and accurate; but *with* them she rarely exchanged a word. Hence it ensued that what her mind had gathered of the real concerning them was too exclusively confined to those tragic and terrible traits of which, in listening to the secret annals of every rude vicinage, the memory is sometimes compelled to receive the impress. Her imagination, which was a spirit more sombre than sunny—more powerful than sportive—found in such traits material whence it wrought creations like Heathcliff, like Earnshaw, like Catherine. Having formed these beings, she did not know what she had done. If the auditor of her work, when read in manuscript, shuddered under the grinding influence of natures so relentless and implacable, of spirits so lost and fallen; if it was complained that the mere hearing of certain vivid and fearful scenes banished sleep by night, and disturbed mental peace by day, Ellis Bell would wonder what was meant, and suspect the complainant of affectation. Had she but lived, her mind would of itself have grown like a strong tree—loftier, straighter, wider-spreading—and its matured fruits would have attained a mellower ripeness and sunnier bloom; but on that mind time and experience alone could work; to the influence of other intellects it was not amenable.'

Whether justly or unjustly, the productions of the two younger Miss Brontës were not received with much favour at the time of their publication. 'Critics failed to do them justice. The immature, but very real, powers revealed in "Wuthering Heights" were scarcely recognised; its import and nature were misunderstood; the identity of its author was misrepresented: it was said that this was an earlier and ruder attempt of the same pen which had produced "Jane Eyre."' . . . 'Unjust and grievous error! We laughed at it at first, but I deeply lament it now.'

Henceforward Charlotte Brontë's existence becomes divided into two parallel currents—her life as Currer Bell, the author; her life as Charlotte Brontë, the woman.

There were separate duties belonging to each character—not opposing each other; not impossible, but difficult to be reconciled. When a man becomes an author, it is probably merely a change of employment to him. He takes a portion of that time which has hitherto been devoted to some other study or pursuit; he gives up something of the legal or medical profession, in which he has hitherto endeavoured to serve others, or relinquishes part of the trade or business by which he has been striving to gain a livelihood; and another merchant, or lawyer, or doctor, steps into his vacant place, and probably does as well as he. But no other can take up the quiet regular duties of the daughter, the wife, or the mother, as well as she whom God has appointed to fill that particular place: a woman's principal work in life is hardly left to her own choice; nor can she drop the domestic charges devolving on her as an individual, for the exercise of the most splendid talents that were ever bestowed. And yet she must not shrink from the extra responsibility implied by the very fact of her possessing such talents. She must not hide her gift in a napkin; it was meant for the use and service of others. In a humble and faithful spirit must she labour to do what is not impossible, or God would not have set her to do it.

I put into words what Charlotte Brontë put into actions.

The year 1848 opened with sad domestic distress. It is necessary, however painful, to remind the reader constantly of what was always present to the hearts of father and sisters at this time. It is well that the thoughtless critics, who spoke of the sad and gloomy views of life presented by the Brontës in their tales, should know how such words were wrung out of them by the living recollection of the long agony they suffered. It is well, too, that they who have objected to the representation of coarseness, and shrunk from it with repugnance, as if such conceptions arose out of the writers, should learn that not from the imagination—not from internal conception—but from the hard, cruel facts, pressed down, by external life, upon their very senses, for

long months and years together, did they write out what they saw, obeying the stern dictates of their consciences. They might be mistaken. They might err in writing at all, when their afflictions were so great that they could not write otherwise than they did of life. It is possible that it would have been better to have described only good and pleasant people, doing only good and pleasant things (in which case they could hardly have written at any time); all I say is, that never, I believe, did women, possessed of such wonderful gifts, exercise them with a fuller feeling of responsibility for their use. As to mistakes, they stand now—as authors as well as women—before the judgment seat of God.

'January 11, 1848.

'We have not been very comfortable here at home lately. Branwell has, by some means, contrived to get more money, from the old quarter, and has led us a sad life with his absurd and often intolerable conduct. Papa is harassed day and night; we have little peace; he is always sick;[1] has two or three times fallen down in fits; what will be the ultimate end God knows. But who is without their drawback, their scourge, their skeleton behind the curtain? It remains only to do one's best, and endure with patience what God sends.'

I suppose that she had read Mr. Lewes's review on 'Recent Novels,' when it appeared in the December of the last year, but I find no allusion to it till she writes to him on January 12, 1848.

'Dear Sir,—I thank you, then, sincerely for your generous review; and it is with the sense of double content I express my gratitude, because I am now sure the tribute is not superfluous or obtrusive. You were not severe on "Jane Eyre;" you were very lenient. I am glad you told me my faults plainly in private, for in your public notice you touch

[1] In the original letter it runs, 'he (B.) is always sick.'

on them so lightly, I should perhaps have passed them over, thus indicated, with too little reflection.

'I mean to observe your warning about being careful how I undertake new works; my stock of materials is not abundant, but very slender; and, besides, neither my experience, my acquirements, nor my powers are sufficiently varied to justify my ever becoming a frequent writer. I tell you this because your article in "Fraser" left in me an uneasy impression that you were disposed to think better of the author of "Jane Eyre" than that individual deserved; and I would rather you had a correct than a flattering opinion of me, even though I should never see you.

'If I ever *do* write another book, I think I will have nothing of what you call "melodrama;" I *think* so, but I am not sure. I *think*, too, I will endeavour to follow the counsel which shines out of Miss Austen's "mild eyes," "to finish more and be more subdued;" but neither am I sure of that. When authors write best, or, at least, when they write most fluently, an influence seems to waken in them, which becomes their master—which will have its own way—putting out of view all behests but its own, dictating certain words, and insisting on their being used, whether vehement or measured in their nature; new-moulding characters, giving unthought-of turns to incidents, rejecting carefully elaborated old ideas, and suddenly creating and adopting new ones.

'Is it not so? And should we try to counteract this influence? Can we indeed counteract it?

'I am glad that another work of yours will soon appear; most curious shall I be to see whether you will write up to your own principles, and work out your own theories. You did not do it altogether in "Ranthorpe"—at least not in the latter part; but the first portion was, I think, nearly without fault; then it had a pith, truth, significance in it which gave the book sterling value; but to write so one must have seen and known a great deal, and I have seen and known very little.

'Why do you like Miss Austen so very much? I am

puzzled on that point. What induced you to say that you would have rather written "Pride and Prejudice" or "Tom Jones," than any of the Waverley Novels?

'I had not seen "Pride and Prejudice," till I read that sentence of yours, and then I got the book. And what did I find? An accurate daguerreotyped portrait of a commonplace face; a carefully fenced, highly cultivated garden, with neat borders and delicate flowers; but no glance of a bright, vivid physiognomy, no open country, no fresh air, no blue hill, no bonny beck. I should hardly like to live with her ladies and gentlemen, in their elegant but confined houses. These observations will probably irritate you, but I shall run the risk.

'Now I can understand admiration of George Sand; for though I never saw any of her works which I admired throughout (even "Consuelo," which is the best, or the best that I have read, appears to me to couple strange extravagance with wondrous excellence), yet she has a grasp of mind which, if I cannot fully comprehend, I can very deeply respect: she is sagacious and profound; Miss Austen is only shrewd and observant.

'Am I wrong; or were you hasty in what you said? If you have time I should be glad to hear further on this subject; if not, or if you think the question frivolous, do not trouble yourself to reply.—I am yours respectfully,

'C. Bell.'

TO G. H. LEWES, ESQ.

'January 18, 1848.

'Dear Sir,—I must write one more note, though I had not intended to trouble you again so soon. I have to agree with you, and to differ from you.

'You correct my crude remarks on the subject of the "influence;" well, I accept your definition of what the effects of that influence should be; I recognise the wisdom of your rules for its regulation. . . .

'What a strange lecture comes next in your letter! You

say I must familiarise my mind with the fact that "Miss Austen is not a poetess, has no 'sentiment'" (you scornfully enclose the word in inverted commas), "no eloquence, none of the ravishing enthusiasm of poetry;" and then you add, I *must* "learn to acknowledge her as *one of the greatest artists, of the greatest painters of human character*, and one of the writers with the nicest sense of means to an end that ever lived."

'The last point only will I ever acknowledge.

'Can there be a great artist without poetry?

'What I call—what I will bend to, as a great artist, then—cannot be destitute of the divine gift. But by *poetry*, I am sure, you understand something different to what I do, as you do by "sentiment." It is *poetry*, as I comprehend the word, which elevates that masculine George Sand, and makes out of something coarse something godlike. It is "sentiment," in my sense of the term—sentiment jealously hidden, but genuine, which extracts the venom from that formidable Thackeray, and converts what might be corrosive poison into purifying elixir.

'If Thackeray did not cherish in his large heart deep feeling for his kind, he would delight to exterminate; as it is, I believe, he wishes only to reform. Miss Austen being, as you say, without "sentiment," without *poetry*, maybe *is* sensible, real (more *real* than *true*), but she cannot be great.

'I submit to your anger, which I have now excited (for have I not questioned the perfection of your darling?); the storm may pass over me. Nevertheless I will, when I can (I do not know when that will be, as I have no access to a circulating library), diligently peruse all Miss Austen's works, as you recommend. . . . You must forgive me for not always being able to think as you do, and still believe me yours gratefully, C. Bell.'

I have hesitated a little before inserting the following extract from a letter to Mr. Williams, but it is strikingly characteristic; and the criticism contained in it is, from that

circumstance, so interesting (whether we agree with it or not) that I have determined to do so, though I thereby displace the chronological order of the letters, in order to complete this portion of a correspondence which is very valuable, as showing the purely intellectual side of her character.[1]

TO W. S. WILLIAMS, ESQ.

'April 26, 1848.

'My dear Sir,—I have now read "Rose, Blanche, and Violet," and I will tell you, as well as I can, what I think of it. Whether it is an improvement on "Ranthorpe" I do not know, for I liked "Ranthorpe" much; but, at any rate, it contains more of a good thing. I find in it the same power, but more fully developed.

'The author's character is seen in every page, which makes the book interesting—far more interesting than any

[1] The following letters, addressed to her publishers, come here by right of date:—

'February 17, 1848.

'I have received your letter and its enclosure—a bank bill for 100*l.*—for which I thank you. Your conduct to me has been such that you cannot doubt my relatives would have been most happy, had it been in their power to avail themselves of your proposal respecting the publication of their future works, but their present engagements to Mr. Newby are such as to prevent their consulting freely their own inclinations and interests, and I need not tell you, who have so clearly proved the weight honour has with you as a principle of action, that engagements must be respected whether they are irksome or not. For my own part I peculiarly regret this circumstance.'

'April 20, 1848.

'I have received the parcel containing Mr. Lewes's new work, and a copy of the third edition of *Jane Eyre*. Accept my sincere thanks for your kind present.

'If the circumstance of a gift being at once unexpected and acceptable can enhance its value, I assure you this is valuable to me. The only drawback to my pleasure in receiving it is, that I think I should have purchased it, and not have had it given to me; but I will not dispute the point with your generosity; there are cases where it is ungracious to decline an obligation; I will endeavour to suppose this one.

'I trust the third edition of *Jane Eyre* will go off well. Mr. Lewes's work, I do not doubt, will prosper.'

story could do; but it is what the writer himself says that attracts, far more than what he puts into the mouths of his characters. G. H. Lewes is, to my perception, decidedly the most original character in the book. . . . The didactic passages seem to me the best—far the best—in the work; very acute, very profound, are some of the views there given, and very clearly they are offered to the reader. He is a just thinker; he is a sagacious observer; there is wisdom in his theory, and, I doubt not, energy in his practice. But why, then, are you often provoked with him while you read? How does he manage, while teaching, to make his hearer feel as if his business was, not quietly to receive the doctrines propounded, but to combat them? You acknowledge that he offers you gems of pure truth: why do you keep perpetually scrutinising them for flaws?

'Mr. Lewes, I divine, with all his talents and honesty, must have some faults of manner; there must be a touch too much of dogmatism: a dash extra of confidence in him, sometimes. This you think while you are reading the book; but when you have closed it and laid it down, and sat a few minutes collecting your thoughts, and settling your impressions, you find the idea or feeling predominant in your mind to be pleasure at the fuller acquaintance you have made with a fine mind and a true heart, with high abilities and manly principles. I hope he will not be long ere he publishes another book. His emotional scenes are somewhat too uniformly vehement: would not a more subdued style of treatment often have produced a more masterly effect? Now and then Mr. Lewes takes a French pen into his hand, wherein he differs from Mr. Thackeray, who always uses an English quill. However, the French pen does not far mislead Mr. Lewes; he wields it with British muscles. All honour to him for the excellent general tendency of his book!

'He gives no charming picture of London literary society, and especially the female part of it; but all coteries, whether they be literary, scientific, political, or religious, must, it seems to me, have a tendency to change truth into affectation. When

people belong to a clique, they must, I suppose, in some measure, write, talk, think, and live for that clique; a harassing and narrowing necessity. I trust the press and the public show themselves disposed to give the book the reception it merits; and that is a very cordial one, far beyond anything due to a Bulwer or D'Israeli production.'

Let us return from Currer Bell to Charlotte Brontë. The winter in Haworth had been a sickly season. Influenza had prevailed amongst the villagers, and where there was a real need for the presence of the clergyman's daughters they were never found wanting, although they were shy of bestowing mere social visits on the parishioners. They had themselves suffered from the epidemic; Anne severely, as in her case it had been attended with cough and fever enough to make her elder sisters very anxious about her.

There is no doubt that the proximity of the crowded churchyard rendered the Parsonage unhealthy, and occasioned much illness to its inmates. Mr. Brontë represented the unsanitary state of Haworth pretty forcibly to the Board of Health; and, after the requisite visits from their officers, obtained a recommendation that all future interments in the churchyard should be forbidden, a new graveyard opened on the hillside, and means set on foot for obtaining a water supply to each house, instead of the weary, hard-worked housewives having to carry every bucketful from a distance of several hundred yards up a steep street. But he was baffled by the ratepayers; as, in many a similar instance, quantity carried it against quality, numbers against intelligence. And thus we find that illness often assumed a low typhoid form in Haworth, and fevers of various kinds visited the place with sad frequency.

In February 1848 Louis Philippe was dethroned. The quick succession of events at that time called forth the following expression of Miss Brontë's thoughts on the subject, in a letter addressed to Miss Wooler, and dated March 31:—

I remember well wishing my lot had been cast in the

troubled times of the late war, and seeing in its exciting incidents a kind of stimulating charm, which it made my pulse beat fast to think of: I remember even, I think, being a little impatient that you would not fully sympathise with my feelings on those subjects; that you heard my aspirations and speculations very tranquilly, and by no means seemed to think the flaming swords could be any pleasant addition to Paradise. I have now outlived youth; and though I dare not say that I have outlived all its illusions—that the romance is quite gone from life—the veil fallen from truth, and that I see both in naked reality—yet certainly many things are not what they were ten years ago; and, amongst the rest, "the pomp and circumstance of war" have quite lost in my eyes their fictitious glitter. I have still no doubt that the shock of moral earthquakes wakens a vivid sense of life, both in nations and individuals; that the fear of dangers on a broad national scale diverts men's minds momentarily from brooding over small private perils, and for the time gives them something like largeness of views; but as little doubt have I that convulsive revolutions put back the world in all that is good, check civilisation, bring the dregs of society to its surface; in short, it appears to me that insurrections and battles are the acute diseases of nations, and that their tendency is to exhaust, by their violence, the vital energies of the countries where they occur. That England may be spared the spasms, cramps, and frenzy fits now contorting the Continent, and threatening Ireland, I earnestly pray. With the French and Irish I have no sympathy. With the Germans and Italians I think the case is different; as different as the love of freedom is from the lust for license.'

Her birthday came round. She wrote to the friend whose birthday was within a week of hers; wrote the accustomed letter: but reading it with our knowledge of what she had done, we perceive the difference between her thoughts and what they were a year or two ago, when she

said, 'I have done nothing.' There must have been a modest consciousness of having 'done something' present in her mind, as she wrote this year—

'I am now thirty-two.[1] Youth is gone—gone—and will never come back: can't help it. . . . It seems to me that sorrow must come some time to everybody, and those who scarcely taste it in their youth often have a more brimming and bitter cup to drain in after life; whereas those who exhaust the dregs early, who drink the lees before the wine, may reasonably hope for more palatable draughts to succeed.'

The authorship of 'Jane Eyre' was as yet a close secret in the Brontë family; not even this friend, who was all but a sister, knew more about it than the rest of the world. She might conjecture, it is true, both from her knowledge of previous habits and from the suspicious fact of the proofs having been corrected at B(rookroyd), that some literary project was afoot; but she knew nothing, and wisely said nothing, until she heard a report from others that Charlotte Brontë was an author—had published a novel! Then she wrote to her, and received the two following letters; confirmatory enough, as it seems to me now, in their very vehemence and agitation of intended denial of the truth of the report:—

'April 28, 1848.

'Write another letter, and explain that last note of yours distinctly. If your allusions are to myself, which I suppose they are, understand this: I have given no one a right to gossip about me, and am not to be judged by frivolous conjectures, emanating from any quarter whatever. Let me know what you heard, and from whom you heard it.'

'May 3, 1848.

'All I can say to you about a certain matter is this: the report—if report there be—and if the lady, who seems to

[1] This letter to Ellen Nussey is dated April 22, 1848. Charlotte Brontë's birthday was April 21.

have been rather mystified, had not dreamt what she fancied had been told to her—must have had its origin in some absurd misunderstanding. I have given *no one* a right either to affirm or to hint, in the most distant manner, that I am "publishing" (humbug!) Whoever has said it—if any one has, which I doubt—is no friend of mine. Though twenty books were ascribed to me, I should own none. I scout the idea utterly. Whoever, after I have distinctly rejected the charge, urges it upon me will do an unkind and ill-bred thing. The most profound obscurity is infinitely preferable to vulgar notoriety; and that notoriety I neither seek nor will have. If, then, any B—an or G—an[1] should presume to bore you on the subject—to ask you what "novel" Miss Brontë has been "publishing," you can just say, with the distinct firmness of which you are perfect mistress when you choose, that you are authorised by Miss Brontë to say that she repels and disowns every accusation of the kind. You may add, if you please, that if any one has her confidence you believe you have, and she has made no drivelling confessions to you on the subject. I am at a loss to conjecture from what source this rumour has come; and, I fear, it has far from a friendly origin. I am not certain, however, and I should be very glad if I could gain certainty. Should you hear anything more, please let me know. Your offer of "Simeon's Life" is a very kind one, and I thank you for it. I dare say papa would like to see the work very much, as he knew Mr. Simeon.[2] Laugh or scold A—— out of the publishing notion; and believe me, through all chances and changes, whether calumniated or let alone, yours faithfully,

C. Brontë.'

The reason why Miss Brontë was so anxious to preserve

[1] 'Any Birstallian or Gomersalian' in original letter.

[2] Charles Simeon (1759–1836), an eminent Evangelical divine of the Church of England. He was a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge, and hence Mr. Brontë's acquaintance with him. He would also be known to him as the patron of the living of Bradford Parish Church, of which Haworth is a chapelry.

her secret was, I am told, that she had pledged her word to her sisters that it should not be revealed through her.

The dilemmas attendant on the publication of the sisters' novels, under assumed names, were increasing upon them. Many critics insisted on believing that all the fictions published as by three Bells were the works of one author, but written at different periods of his development and maturity. No doubt this suspicion affected the reception of the books. Ever since the completion of Anne Brontë's tale of 'Agnes Grey' she had been labouring at a second, 'The Tenant of Wildfell Hall.' It is little known; the subject—the deterioration of a character, whose profligacy and ruin took their rise in habits of intemperance, so slight as to be only considered 'good fellowship'—was painfully discordant to one who would fain have sheltered herself from all but peaceful and religious ideas. 'She had' (says her sister of that gentle 'little one'), 'in the course of her life, been called on to contemplate near at hand, and for a long time, the terrible effects of talents misused and faculties abused; hers was naturally a sensitive, reserved, and dejected nature; what she saw sank very deeply into her mind; it did her harm. She brooded over it till she believed it to be a duty to reproduce every detail (of course with fictitious characters, incidents, and situations), as a warning to others. She hated her work, but would pursue it. When reasoned with on the subject she regarded such reasonings as a temptation to self-indulgence. She must be honest; she must not varnish, soften, or conceal. This well-meant resolution brought on her misconstruction, and some abuse, which she bore, as it was her custom to bear whatever was unpleasant, with mild, steady patience. She was a very sincere and practical Christian, but the tinge of religious melancholy communicated a sad shade to her brief blameless life.'

In the June of this year 'The Tenant of Wildfell Hall'[1]

[1] '*The Tenant of Wildfell Hall. By Acton Bell. In three Volumes. London: T. C. Newby, Publisher. 72 Mortimer St., Cavendish Sq.* 1848.' The book went into a second edition the same year, and to this

was sufficiently near its completion to be submitted to the person who had previously published for Ellis and Acton Bell.[1]

In consequence of his mode of doing business considerable annoyance was occasioned both to Miss Brontë and to them. The circumstances, as detailed in a letter of hers to a friend in New Zealand, were these :—One morning, at the beginning of July, a communication was received at the Parsonage from Messrs. Smith, Elder, & Co. which disturbed its quiet inmates not a little, as, though the matter brought under their notice was merely referred to as one which affected their literary reputation, they conceived it to have a bearing likewise upon their character. 'Jane Eyre' had had a great run in America, and a publisher there had consequently bid high for early sheets of the next work by 'Currer Bell.' These Messrs. Smith, Elder, & Co. had promised to let him have. He was therefore greatly astonished, and not well pleased, to learn that a similar agreement had been entered into with another American house, and that the new tale was very shortly to appear. It turned out, upon inquiry, that the mistake had originated in Acton and Ellis Bell's

edition Anne Brontë contributed a 'Preface,' in which she said, 'Respecting the author's identity, I would have it to be distinctly understood that Acton Bell is neither Currer nor Ellis Bell, and therefore let not his faults be attributed to them.'

[1] Here is a letter addressed to Mr. George Smith, of Smith, Elder, & Co. It is dated June 15, 1848 :—

'*Mirabeau* reached me this morning; this is the third valuable and interesting work I have received from your hands; such often-repeated kindness leaves me at a loss for words in which to express my sense of it. Not being ingenious enough to coin new terms of acknowledgment, I must even have recourse to the old ones, and repeat once more, "I thank you."

'Mirabeau being one of the most remarkable characters of a remarkable era, I look forward to the perusal of his life with much interest. I should think the two portraits given are excellent; they both seem full of character, rendering the strong, striking physiognomy of the original with most satisfactory effect.'

publisher having assured this American house that, to the best of his belief, 'Jane Eyre,' 'Wuthering Heights,' and 'The Tenant of Wildfell Hall' (which he pronounced superior to either of the other two) were all written by the same author.

Though Messrs. Smith, Elder, & Co. distinctly stated in their letter that they did not share in such 'belief,' the sisters were impatient till they had shown its utter groundlessness, and set themselves perfectly straight. With rapid decision they resolved that Charlotte and Anne should start for London that very day, in order to prove their separate identity to Messrs. Smith, Elder, and Co., and demand from the credulous publisher his reasons for a 'belief' so directly at variance with an assurance which had several times been given to him. Having arrived at this determination, they made their preparations with resolute promptness. There were many household duties to be performed that day; but they were all got through. The two sisters each packed up a change of dress in a small box, which they sent down to Keighley by an opportune cart; and after early tea they set off to walk thither—no doubt in some excitement; for, independently of the cause of their going to London, it was Anne's first visit there. A great thunderstorm overtook them on their way that summer evening to the station; but they had no time to seek shelter. They only just caught the train at Keighley, arrived at Leeds, and were whirled up by the night train to London.

About eight o'clock on the Saturday morning they arrived at the Chapter Coffee-house,[1] Paternoster Row—a strange place, but they did not well know where else to go.

[1] The Chapter Coffee-house, at the west corner of Paul's Alley, Paternoster Row, 'was noted in the last century as the place of meeting of the London publishers' (*Wheatley's London*). It was here in 1777 that the edition of the British poets for which Johnson wrote his *Lives* was arranged for. The building was destroyed in 1858, and a public-house stands on the site, with a draper's work-rooms above. A set of first editions of the Brontë novels was bound in wood from a beam of the old building by Mr. Elliot Stock, the publisher and bookseller, of Paternoster Row.

They refreshed themselves by washing, and had some breakfast. Then they sat still for a few minutes, to consider what next should be done.

When they had been discussing their project in the quiet of Haworth Parsonage the day before, and planning the mode of setting about the business on which they were going to London, they had resolved to take a cab, if they should find it desirable, from their inn to Cornhill; but amidst the bustle and 'queer state of inward excitement' in which they found themselves, as they sat and considered their position on the Saturday morning, they quite forgot even the possibility of hiring a conveyance; and when they set forth they became so dismayed by the crowded streets, and the impeded crossings, that they stood still repeatedly, in complete despair of making progress, and were nearly an hour in walking the half-mile they had to go. Neither Mr. Smith nor Mr. Williams knew that they were coming; they were entirely unknown to the publishers of 'Jane Eyre,' who were not, in fact, aware whether the 'Bells' were men or women, but had always written to them as to men.

On reaching Mr. Smith's Charlotte put his own letter into his hands, the same letter which had excited so much disturbance at Haworth Parsonage only twenty-four hours before. 'Where did you get this?' said he, as if he could not believe that the two young ladies dressed in black, of slight figures and diminutive stature, looking pleased yet agitated, could be the embodied Currer and Acton Bell, for whom curiosity had been hunting so eagerly in vain. An explanation ensued, and Mr. Smith at once began to form plans for their amusement and pleasure during their stay in London. He urged them to meet a few literary friends at his house; and this was a strong temptation to Charlotte, as amongst them were one or two of the writers whom she particularly wished to see; but her resolution to remain unknown induced her firmly to put it aside.

The sisters were equally persevering in declining Mr. Smith's invitations to stay at his house. They refused to

leave their quarters, saying they were not prepared for a long stay.

When they returned back to their inn, poor Charlotte paid for the excitement of the interview, which had wound up the agitation and hurry of the last twenty-four hours, by a racking headache and harassing sickness. Towards evening, as she rather expected some of the ladies of Mr. Smith's family to call, she prepared herself for the chance by taking a strong dose of sal volatile, which roused her a little, but still, as she says, she was 'in grievous bodily case' when their visitors were announced, in full evening costume. The sisters had not understood that it had been settled that they were to go to the Opera, and therefore were not ready. Moreover they had no fine, elegant dresses either with them or in the world. But Miss Brontë resolved to raise no objections in the acceptance of kindness. So, in spite of headache and weariness, they made haste to dress themselves in their plain, high-made country garments.

Charlotte says, in an account which she gives to her friend of this visit to London, describing the entrance of her party into the Opera House—

'Fine ladies and gentlemen glanced at us, as we stood by the box door, which was not yet opened, with a slight graceful superciliousness, quite warranted by the circumstances. Still I felt pleasurably excited in spite of headache, sickness, and conscious clownishness; and I saw Anne was calm and gentle, which she always is. The performance was Rossini's "Barber of Seville"—very brilliant, though I fancy there are things I should like better. We had got home after one o'clock. We had never been in bed the night before; had been in constant excitement for twenty-four hours; you may imagine we were tired. The next day, Sunday, Mr. Williams came early to take us to church; and in the afternoon Mr. Smith and his mother fetched us in a carriage, and took us to his house to dine.

'On Monday we went to the Exhibition of the Royal

Academy, the National Gallery, dined again at Mr. Smith's, and then went home to tea with Mr. Williams at his house.

'On Tuesday morning we left London, laden with books Mr. Smith had given us, and got safely home. A more jaded wretch than I looked it would be difficult to conceive. I was thin when I went, but I was meagre indeed when I returned, my face looking grey and very old, with strange deep lines ploughed in it; my eyes stared unnaturally. I was weak and yet restless. In a while, however, these bad effects of excitement went off, and I regained my normal condition.'[1]

[1] Mrs. Gaskell made use of a letter addressed to Mary Taylor in her account of this visit to London, but the letter has many characteristic touches which make it not the least valuable of the hitherto unpublished material. It is interesting also to compare it with Mrs. Gaskell's skilful paraphrase :—

TO MISS MARY TAYLOR.

'Haworth :
'September 4, 1848.

'Dear Polly,—I write you a great many more letters than you write me, though whether they all reach you, or not, Heaven knows! I dare say you will not be without a certain desire to know how our affairs get on; I will give you, therefore, a notion as briefly as may be. Acton Bell has published another book; it is in three volumes, but I do not like it quite so well as *Agnes Grey*, the subject not being such as the Author had pleasure in handling. It has been praised by some reviews and blamed by others; as yet only 25*l.* have been realised for the copyright, and, as Acton Bell's publisher is a shuffling scamp, I expected no more.

'About two months since I had a letter from my publishers—Smith and Elder—saying that *Jane Eyre* had had a great run in America, and that a publisher there had consequently bid high for the first sheets of a new work by Currer Bell, which they had promised to let him have.

'Presently after came another missive from Smith and Elder; their American correspondent had written to them complaining that the first sheets of a new work by Currer Bell had been already received, and not by their house, but by a rival publisher, and asking the meaning of such false play; it enclosed an extract from a letter from Mr. Newby (A. and E. Bell's publisher) affirming that to the best of his belief *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (the new work) were all the production of one writer.

'This was a *lie*, as Newby had been told repeatedly that they were

The impression Miss Brontë made upon those with whom she first became acquainted during this visit to London was of a person with clear judgment and fine sense;

the production of three different authors; but the fact was he wanted to make a dishonest move in the game to make the public and the trade believe that he had got hold of Currer Bell, and thus cheat Smith & Elder by securing the American publisher's bid.

'The upshot of it was that on the very day I received Smith & Elder's letter Anne and I packed up a small box, sent it down to Keighley, set out ourselves after tea—walked through a snowstorm to the station, got to Leeds, and whirled up by the night train to London, with the view of proving our separate identity to Smith & Elder, and confronting Newby with his *lie*.

'We arrived at the Chapter Coffee-house (our old place, Polly; we did not well know where else to go) about eight o'clock in the morning. We washed ourselves, had some breakfast, sat a few minutes, and then set off in queer inward excitement to 65 Cornhill. Neither Mr. Smith nor Mr. Williams knew we were coming; they had never seen us; they did not know whether we were men or women, but had always written to us as men.

'We found 65 to be a large bookseller's shop, in a street almost as bustling as the Strand. We went in, walked up to the counter. There were a great many young men and lads here and there. I said to the first I could accost, "May I see Mr. Smith?" He hesitated, looked a little surprised. We sat down and waited a while, looking at some books on the counter, publications of theirs well known to us, of many of which they had sent us copies as presents. At last we were shown up to Mr. Smith. "Is it Mr. Smith?" I said, looking up through my spectacles at a tall young man. "It is." I then put his own letter into his hand directed to Currer Bell. He looked at it and then at me again. "Where did you get this?" he said. I laughed at his perplexity; a recognition took place. I gave my real name—Miss Brontë. We were in a small room, ceiled with a great skylight, and there explanations were rapidly gone into, Mr. Newby being anathematised, I fear, with undue vehemence. Mr. Smith hurried out and returned quickly with one whom he introduced as Mr. Williams, a pale, mild, stooping man of fifty, very much like a faded Tom Dixon. Another recognition and a long nervous shaking of hands. Then followed talk—talk—talk, Mr. Williams being silent, Mr. Smith loquacious.

'Mr. Smith said we must come and stay at his house, but we were not prepared for a long stay and declined this also; as we took our leave he told us he should bring his sisters to call on us that evening. We

and though reserved, possessing unconsciously the power of drawing out others in conversation. She never expressed an opinion without assigning a reason for it; she never put

returned to our inn, and I paid for the excitement of the interview by a thundering headache and harassing sickness. Towards evening, as I got no better and expected the Smiths to call, I took a strong dose of sal-volatile. It roused me a little; still I was in grievous bodily case when they were announced. They came in, two elegant young ladies, in full dress, prepared for the Opera—Mr. Smith himself in evening costume, white gloves, &c. We had by no means understood that it was settled we were to go to the Opera, and were not ready. Moreover we had no fine, elegant dresses with us, or in the world. However on brief rumination I thought it would be wise to make no objections. I put my headache in my pocket; we attired ourselves in the plain, high-made country garments we possessed, and went with them to their carriage, where we found Mr. Williams. They must have thought us queer, quizzical-looking beings, especially me with my spectacles. I smiled inwardly at the contrast which must have been apparent between me and Mr. Smith as I walked with him up the crimson carpeted staircase of the Opera House and stood amongst a brilliant throng at the box door, which was not yet open. Fine ladies and gentlemen glanced at us with a slight graceful superciliousness quite warranted by the circumstances. Still I felt pleasantly excited in spite of headache and sickness and conscious clownishness, and I saw Anne was calm and gentle, which she always is.

'The performance was Rossini's opera of the *Barber of Seville*, very brilliant, though I fancy there are things I should like better. We got home after one o'clock. We had never been in bed the night before, and had been in constant excitement for twenty-four hours. You may imagine we were tired.

'The next day, Sunday, Mr. Williams came early and took us to church. He was so quiet but so sincere in his attentions one could not but have a most friendly leaning towards him. He has a nervous hesitation in speech, and a difficulty in finding appropriate language in which to express himself, which throws him into the background in conversation, but I had been his correspondent and therefore knew with what intelligence he could write, so that I was not in danger of under-valuing him. In the afternoon Mr. Smith came in his carriage with his mother, to take us to his house to dine. Mr. Smith's residence is at Bayswater, six miles from Cornhill; the rooms, the drawing-room especially, looked splendid to us. There was no company—only his mother, his two grown-up sisters, and his brother, a lad of twelve or

a question without a definite purpose; and yet people felt at their ease in talking with her. All conversation with her was genuine and stimulating; and when she launched forth in praise or reprobation of books, or deeds, or works of art, her eloquence was indeed burning. She was thorough in all that she said or did; yet so open and fair in dealing with a subject, or contending with an opponent, that instead of rousing resentment she merely convinced her hearers of her earnest zeal for the truth and right.

Not the least singular part of their proceedings was the place at which the sisters had chosen to stay.

Paternoster Row was for many years sacred to publishers. It is a narrow flagged street, lying under the shadow of St. Paul's. The dull warehouses on each side are mostly

thirteen, and a little sister, the youngest of the family, very like himself. They are all dark-eyed, dark-haired, and have clear, pale faces. The mother is a portly, handsome woman of her age, and all the children more or less well-looking—one of the daughters decidedly pretty. We had a fine dinner, which neither Anne nor I had appetite to eat, and were glad when it was over. I always feel under an awkward constraint at table. Dining out would be hideous to me.

'Mr. Smith made himself very pleasant. He is a *practical* man. I wish Mr. Williams were more so, but he is altogether of the contemplative, theorising order. Mr. Williams has too many abstractions.

'On Monday we went to the Exhibition of the Royal Academy and the National Gallery, dined again at Mr. Smith's, then went home with Mr. Williams to tea and saw his comparatively humble but neat residence and his fine family of eight children. A daughter of Leigh Hunt was there; she sang some little Italian airs, which she had picked up among the peasantry in Tuscany, in a manner that charmed me.

'On Tuesday morning we left London, laden with books which Mr. Smith had given us, and got safely home. A more jaded wretch than I looked when I returned it would be difficult to conceive. I was thin when I went, but was meagre indeed when I returned; my face looked grey and very old, with strange deep lines ploughed in it; my eyes stared unnaturally. I was weak and yet restless. In a while, however, the bad effects of excitement went off and I regained my normal condition.

'We saw Mr. Newby, but of him more another time.

'Good-bye. God bless you. Write.

'C. B.'

occupied at present by wholesale booksellers; if they be publishers' shops, they show no attractive front to the dark and narrow street. Halfway up, on the left-hand side, is the Chapter Coffee-house. I visited it last June. It was then unoccupied. It had the appearance of a dwelling-house, two hundred years old or so, such as one sometimes sees in ancient country towns; the ceilings of the small rooms were low, and had heavy beams running across them; the walls were wainscoted breast high; the staircase was shallow, broad, and dark, taking up much space in the centre of the house. This, then, was the Chapter Coffee-house, which, a century ago, was the resort of all the booksellers and publishers; and where the literary hacks, the critics, and even the wits used to go in search of ideas or employment. This was the place about which Chatterton wrote, in those delusive letters he sent to his mother at Bristol, while he was starving in London. 'I am quite familiar at the Chapter Coffee-house, and know all the geniuses there.' Here he heard of chances of employment; here his letters were to be left.

Years later it became the tavern frequented by University men and country clergymen who were up in London for a few days, and, having no private friends or access into society, were glad to learn what was going on in the world of letters from the conversation which they were sure to hear in the coffee room. In Mr. Brontë's few and brief visits to town, during his residence at Cambridge, and the period of his curacy in Essex, he had stayed at this house; hither he had brought his daughters, when he was convoying them to Brussels; and here they came now, from very ignorance where else to go. It was a place solely frequented by men; I believe there was but one female servant in the house. Few people slept there; some of the stated meetings of the Trade were held in it, as they had been for more than a century; and, occasionally, country booksellers, with now and then a clergyman, resorted to it; but it was a strange, desolate place for the Miss Brontës to have gone to, from its

purely business and masculine aspect. The old 'grey-haired, elderly man' who officiated as waiter seems to have been touched from the very first with the quiet simplicity of the two ladies, and he tried to make them feel comfortable and at home in the long, low, dingy room upstairs, where the meetings of the Trade were held. The high, narrow windows looked into the gloomy Row; the sisters, clinging together on the most remote window seat (as Mr. Smith tells me he found them when he came, that Saturday evening, to take them to the Opera), could see nothing of motion, or of change, in the grim, dark houses opposite, so near and close, although the whole breadth of the Row was between. The mighty roar of London was round them, like the sound of an unseen ocean, yet every footfall on the pavement below might be heard distinctly in that unfrequented street. Such as it was, they preferred remaining at the Chapter Coffee-house to accepting the invitation which Mr. Smith and his mother urged upon them; and, in after years, Charlotte says—

'Since those days I have seen the West End, the parks, the fine squares; but I love the City far better. The City seems so much more in earnest; its business, its rush, its roar are such serious things, sights, sounds. The City is getting its living—the West End but enjoying its pleasure. At the West End you may be amused; but in the City you are deeply excited.'[1]

Their wish had been to hear Dr. Croly on the Sunday morning, and Mr. Williams escorted them to St. Stephen's, Walbrook; but they were disappointed, as Dr. Croly did not preach. Mr. Williams also took them (as Miss Brontë has mentioned) to drink tea at his house. On the way thither they had to pass through Kensington Gardens, and Miss Brontë was much 'struck with the beauty of the scene, the fresh verdure of the turf, and the soft, rich masses of foliage.' From remarks on the different character of the landscape in the South from what it was in the North, she was led to speak

[1] *Villette*, vol. i. p. 89.

of the softness and varied intonation of the voices of those with whom she conversed in London, which seem to have made a strong impression on both sisters. All this time those who came in contact with the 'Miss Browns' (another pseudonym, also beginning with B) seem only to have regarded them as shy and reserved little countrywomen, with not much to say. Mr. Williams tells me that on the night when he accompanied the party to the Opera, as Charlotte ascended the flight of stairs leading from the grand entrance up to the lobby of the first tier of boxes, she was so much struck with the architectural effect of the splendid decorations of that vestibule and saloon, that involuntarily she slightly pressed his arm and whispered, 'You know I am not accustomed to this sort of thing.' Indeed, it must have formed a vivid contrast to what they were doing and seeing an hour or two earlier the night before, when they were trudging along with beating hearts and high-strung courage on the road between Haworth and Keighley, hardly thinking of the thunderstorm that beat about their heads, for the thoughts which filled them of how they would go straight away to London, and prove that they were really two people and not one impostor. It was no wonder that they returned to Haworth thoroughly fagged and worn out, after the fatigue and excitement of this visit.

The next notice I find of Charlotte's life at this time is of a different character from anything telling of enjoyment.

'July 28.

'Branwell is the same in conduct as ever. His constitution seems much shattered. Papa, and sometimes all of us, have sad nights with him. He sleeps most of the day, and consequently will lie awake at night. But has not every house its trial?' [1]

[1] The following letter to Mr. George Smith is dated August 17, 1848:—

'How you can expect to escape the infliction of thanks by means of that ingenuous explanation of the value (to you) of the books you send

While her most intimate friends were yet in ignorance of the fact of her authorship of 'Jane Eyre,' she received a letter from one of them making inquiries about Casterton School. It is but right to give her answer, written on August 28, 1848.[1]

'Since you wish to hear from me while you are from home, I will write without further delay. It often happens that when we linger at first in answering a friend's letter obstacles occur to retard us to an inexcusably late period. In my last I forgot to answer a question which you asked me, and was sorry afterwards for the omission. I will begin, therefore, by replying to it, though I fear what information I can give will come a little late. You said Mrs. —— had some thoughts of sending —— to school, and wished to know whether the Clergy Daughters' School at Casterton was an eligible place. My personal knowledge of that institution is very much out of date, being derived from the experience of twenty years ago. The establishment was at that time in its infancy, and a sad, rickety infancy it was. Typhus fever

me I don't know. Consider yourself now thanked twice as much as ever; if you are overwhelmed I am sorry, but I cannot help it, nor can I diminish one atom of the burden. The case for me stands as it did before; it was not so much by the *sacrifice* your gifts cost *you* that I reckoned their value, as by the *pleasure* they gave *me*, and, as that pleasure is enhanced by what you tell me, I ought to be, and, I hope, am, still more grateful.

'I have received the books; the parcel from Messrs. Bradbury & Evans contained, as you conjectured, a copy of *Vanity Fair*. I send the accompanying note of acknowledgment to be posted in London.

'I will not return Charles Lamb, for in truth he is very welcome. I saw a review with extracts in the *Examiner*, and thought at the time I should much like to read the whole work. But, having accepted this book, I tell you distinctly that I will not accept any more till such time as I shall have finished another manuscript, and you find it such as you like.

'My sister joins me in kind remembrances to your mother, sisters, and yourself.'

[1] To Miss Wooler.

decimated the school periodically;[1] and consumption and scrofula, in every variety of form bad air and water, bad and insufficient diet can generate, preyed on the ill-fated pupils. It would not *then* have been a fit place for any of Mrs. ——'s children; but I understand it is very much altered for the better since those days. The school is removed from Cowan's Bridge (a situation as unhealthy as it was picturesque—low, damp, beautiful with wood and water) to Casterton. The accommodations, the diet, the discipline, the system of tuition —all are, I believe, entirely altered and greatly improved. I was told that such pupils as behaved well, and remained at the school till their education was finished, were provided with situations as governesses, if they wished to adopt the vocation, and much care was exercised in the selection; it was added that they were also furnished with an excellent wardrobe on leaving Casterton. . . . The oldest family in Haworth failed lately, and have quitted the neighbourhood where their fathers resided before them for, it is said, thirteen generations. . . . Papa, I am most thankful to say, continues in very good health, considering his age; his sight, too, rather, I think, improves than deteriorates. My sisters likewise are pretty well.'

But the dark cloud was hanging over that doomed household, and gathering blackness every hour.

On October 9 she thus writes:[2]—

'The past three weeks have been a dark interval in our humble home. Branwell's constitution had been failing fast all the summer; but still neither the doctors nor himself thought him so near his end as he was. He was entirely confined to his bed but for one single day, and was in the village two days before his death. He died, after twenty minutes' struggle, on Sunday morning, September 24. He

[1] Mr. W. W. Carus Wilson wishes me to mention that this statement is a mistake. He says they have only had typhus fever twice in the school (either at Cowan Bridge or at Casterton) since its institution in 1823 (*Note by Mrs. Gaskell*).

[2] In a letter to Ellen Nussey.

was perfectly conscious till the last agony came on. His mind had undergone the peculiar change which frequently precedes death, two days previously; the calm of better feelings filled it; a return of natural affection marked his last moments. He is in God's hands now; and the All-Powerful is likewise the All-Merciful. A deep conviction that he rests at last—rests well after his brief, erring, suffering, feverish life—fills and quiets my mind now. The final separation, the spectacle of his pale corpse, gave me more acute, bitter pain than I could have imagined. Till the last hour comes we never know how much we can forgive, pity, regret a near relative. All his vices were and are nothing now. We remember only his woes. Papa was acutely distressed at first, but, on the whole, has borne the event well. Emily and Anne are pretty well, though Anne is always delicate, and Emily has a cold and cough at present. It was my fate to sink at the crisis, when I should have collected my strength. Headache and sickness came on first on the Sunday; I could not regain my appetite. Then internal pain attacked me. I became at once much reduced. It was impossible to touch a morsel. At last bilious fever declared itself. I was confined to bed a week—a dreary week. But, thank God! health seems now returning. I can sit up all day, and take moderate nourishment. The doctor said at first I should be very slow in recovering, but I seemed to get on faster than he anticipated. I am truly *much better*.'

I have heard, from one who attended Branwell in his last illness, that he resolved on standing up to die. He had repeatedly said that as long as there was life there was strength of will to do what it chose; and when the last agony began he insisted on assuming the position just mentioned.[1]

[1] The following letter from Charlotte Brontë to her friend Mr. W. S. Williams, of Smith, Elder & Co., supplements the text:—

'October 2, 1848.

'My dear Sir,—"We have hurried our dead out of our sight." A

'October 29, 1848.

'I think I have now nearly got over the effects of my late illness, and am almost restored to my normal condition of health. I sometimes wish that it was a little higher, but we ought to be content with such blessings as we have, and not pine after those that are out of our reach. I feel much more uneasy about my sister than myself just now. Emily's

lull begins to succeed the gloomy tumult of last week. It is not permitted us to grieve for him who is gone as others grieve for those they lose. The removal of our only brother must necessarily be regarded by us rather in the light of a mercy than a chastisement. Branwell was his father's and his sisters' pride and hope in boyhood, but since manhood the case has been otherwise. It has been our lot to see him take a wrong bent; to hope, expect, wait his return to the right path; to know the sickness of hope deferred, the dismay of prayer baffled; to experience despair at last—and now to behold the sudden early obscure close of what might have been a noble career.

'I do not weep from a sense of bereavement—there is no prop withdrawn, no consolation torn away, no dear companion lost—but for the wreck of talent, the ruin of promise, the untimely dreary extinction of what might have been a burning and a shining light. My brother was a year my junior. I had aspirations and ambitions for him once, long ago; they have perished mournfully. Nothing remains of him but a memory of errors and sufferings. There is such a bitterness of pity for his life and death, such a yearning for the emptiness of his whole existence, as I cannot describe. I trust time will allay these feelings.

'My poor father naturally thought more of his *only* son than of his daughters, and, much and long as he had suffered on his account, he cried out for his loss like David for that of Absalom—"My son! my son!"—and refused at first to be comforted. And then, when I ought to have been able to collect my strength and be at hand to support him, I fell ill with an illness whose approaches I had felt for some time previously, and of which the crisis was hastened by the awe and trouble of the death scene, the first I had ever witnessed. The past has seemed to me a strange week. Thank God, for my father's sake, I am better now, though still feeble. I wish indeed I had more general physical strength; the want of it is sadly in my way. I cannot do what I would do for want of sustained animal spirits and efficient bodily vigour.

'My unhappy brother never knew what his sisters had done in literature; he was not aware that they had ever published a line. We could not tell him of our efforts for fear of causing him too deep a pang

cold and cough are very obstinate. I fear she has pain in her chest, and I sometimes catch a shortness in her breathing, when she has moved at all quickly. She looks very thin and pale. Her reserved nature occasions me great uneasiness of mind. It is useless to question her; you get no answers. It is still more useless to recommend remedies; they are never adopted. Nor can I shut my eyes to Anne's great delicacy of constitution. The late sad event has, I feel, made me more apprehensive than common. I cannot help feeling much depressed sometimes. I try to leave all in God's hands; to trust in His goodness; but faith and resignation are difficult to practise under some circumstances. The weather has been most unfavourable for invalids of late; sudden changes of temperature, and cold penetrating winds have been frequent here. Should the atmosphere become more settled, perhaps a favourable effect might be produced on the general health, and these harassing colds and coughs be removed. Papa has not quite escaped, but he has so far stood it better than any of us. You must not mention my going to Brookroyd this winter. I could not, and would not, leave home on any account. Miss Heald has been for some years out of health now. These things make one *feel*, as well as *know*, that this world is not our abiding-place. We should not knit human ties too close, or clasp human affections too fondly. They must leave us, or we must leave them, one day. God restore health and strength to all who need it!' [1]

of remorse for his own time misspent and talents misapplied. Now he will *never* know. I cannot dwell longer on the subject at present; it is too painful.

'I thank you for your kind sympathy, and pray earnestly that your sons may all do well, and that you may be spared the sufferings my father has gone through.

'Yours sincerely,

'C. Brontë.'

'A letter of November 7, 1848, to Mr. George Smith has its place here:—

'I have received your letter containing a remittance of 100*l.* I think

I go on now with her own affecting words in the biographical notice of her sisters.

'But a great change approached. Affliction came in that shape which to anticipate is dread, to look back on grief. In the very heat and burden of the day the labourers failed over their work. My sister Emily first declined. . . . Never in all her life had she lingered over any task that lay before her, and she did not linger now. She sank rapidly. She made haste to leave us. . . . Day by day, when I saw with what a front she met suffering, I looked on her with an anguish of wonder and love. I have seen nothing like it; but, indeed, I have never seen her parallel in anything. Stronger than a man, simpler than a child, her nature stood alone. The awful point was that, while full of ruth for others, on herself she had no pity; the spirit was inexorable to the flesh; from the trembling hand, the unnerved limbs, the fading eyes, the same service was exacted as they had rendered in health. To stand by and witness this,

I am chiefly glad of it for the proof it seems to afford that the third edition of *Jane Eyre* does not lie a dead weight on your hands. I was afraid this might be the case, and it would chagrin me to think that any work of "Currer Bell's" acted as a drag on your progress; my wish is to serve a contrary purpose, because it seems to me, from what I know, and still more from what I *hear* of you, that you so well deserve success. In this point of view I sometimes feel anxious about the little volume of poems; I hope it will not be a mere incumbrance in your shop, so as to give you reason to regret having purchased it.

'I will do myself the pleasure of writing to you again when I receive the books you mention. You see I carefully abstain from uttering a word of thanks, but I must inform you that the loan of the books is indeed well-timed; no more acceptable benefit could have been conferred on my dear sister Emily, who is at present too ill to occupy herself with writing, or indeed with anything but reading. She smiled when I told her Mr. Smith was going to send some more books. She was pleased. They will be a source of interest for her when her cough and fever will permit her to take interest in anything. Now you may judge whether or not you have laid me under an obligation.

'My sister Anne joins with me in kind regards to yourself, your mother and sisters.'

and not dare to remonstrate, was a pain no words can render.'

In fact Emily never went out of doors after the Sunday succeeding Branwell's death. She made no complaint; she would not endure questioning; she rejected sympathy and help. Many a time did Charlotte and Anne drop their sewing, or cease from their writing, to listen with wrung hearts to the failing step, the laboured breathing, the frequent pauses, with which their sister climbed the short staircase; yet they dared not notice what they observed, with pangs of suffering even deeper than hers. They dared not notice it in words, far less by the caressing assistance of a helping arm or hand. They sat still and silent.

'November 23, 1848.

'I told you Emily was ill in my last letter. She has not rallied yet. She is *very* ill. I believe, if you were to see her, your impression would be that there is no hope. A more hollow, wasted, pallid aspect I have not beheld. The deep, tight cough continues; the breathing after the least exertion is a rapid pant; and these symptoms are accompanied by pains in the chest and side. Her pulse, the only time she allowed it to be felt, was found to beat 115 per minute. In this state she resolutely refuses to see a doctor; she will give no explanation of her feelings; she will scarcely allow her feelings to be alluded to. Our position is, and has been for some weeks, exquisitely painful. God only knows how all this is to terminate. More than once I have been forced boldly to regard the terrible event of her loss as possible, and even probable. But nature shrinks from such thoughts. I think Emily seems the nearest thing to my heart in the world.'[1]

[1] A letter addressed to Mr. Williams on November 22 may be read here:—

'My dear Sir,—I put your most friendly letter into Emily's hands as soon as I had myself perused it, taking care, however, not to say a word in favour of homœopathy; that would not have answered. It is best usually to leave her to form her own judgment, and *especially* not to advocate the side you wish her to favour; if you do she is sure to lean in

When a doctor had been sent for, and was in the very house, Emily refused to see him. Her sisters could only describe to him what symptoms they had observed; and the medicines which he sent she would not take, denying that she was ill.

the opposite direction, and ten to one will argue herself into non-compliance. Hitherto she has refused medicine, rejected medical advice; no reasoning, no entreaty has availed to induce her to see a physician. After reading your letter she said, "Mr. Williams's intention was kind and good, but he was under a delusion: homœopathy was only another form of quackery." Yet she may reconsider this opinion and come to a different conclusion; her second thoughts are often the best.

'The *North American Review* is worth reading; there is no mincing the matter there. What a bad set the Bells must be! What appalling books they write! To-day, as Emily appeared a little easier, I thought the *Review* would amuse her, so I read it aloud to her and Anne. As I sat between them at our quiet but now somewhat melancholy fireside I studied the two ferocious authors. Ellis, the "man of uncommon talents, but dogged, brutal, and morose," sat leaning back in his easy chair, drawing his impeded breath as he best could, and looking, alas! piteously pale and wasted; it is not his wont to laugh, but he smiled, half amused and half in scorn, as he listened. Acton was sewing; no emotion ever stirs him to loquacity, so he only smiled too, dropping at the same time a single word of calm amazement to hear his character so darkly portrayed. I wonder what the reviewer would have thought of his own sagacity could he have beheld the pair as I did. Vainly, too, might he have looked round for the masculine partner in the firm of "Bell & Co." How I laugh in my sleeve when I read the solemn assertions that *Jane Eyre* was written in partnership, and that it bears the marks of more than one mind and one sex!

'The wise critics would certainly sink a degree in their own estimation if they knew that yours or Mr. Smith's was the first masculine hand that touched the MS. of *Jane Eyre*, and that till you or he read it no masculine eye had scanned a line of its contents, no masculine ear heard a phrase from its pages. However the view they take of the matter rather pleases me than otherwise. If they like I am not unwilling they should think a dozen ladies and gentlemen aided at the compilation of the book. Strange patchwork it must seem to them—this chapter being penned by Mr. and that by Miss or Mrs. Bell; that character or scene being delineated by the husband, that other by the wife! The gentleman, of course, doing the rough work, the lady getting up the finer parts. I admire the idea vastly.'

'I hardly know what to say to you about the subject which now interests me the most keenly of anything in this world, for, in truth, I hardly know what to think myself. Hope and fear fluctuate daily. The pain in her side and chest is better: the cough, the sharpness of breath, the extreme emaciation continue. I have endured, however, such tortures of uncertainty on this subject that, at length, I could endure it no longer; and, as her repugnance to see a medical man continues immutable—as she declares "no poisoning doctor" shall come near her—I have written, unknown to her, to an eminent physician in London, giving as minute a statement of her case and symptoms as I could draw up, and requesting an opinion. I expect an answer in a day or two. I am thankful to say that my own health at present is very tolerable. It is well such is the case; for Anne, with the best will in the world to be useful, is really too delicate to do or bear much. She, too, at present, has frequent pains in the side. Papa is also pretty well, though Emily's state renders him very anxious.

'The ——s[1] (Anne Brontë's former pupils) were here about a week ago. They are attractive and stylish-looking girls. They seemed overjoyed to see Anne; when I went into the room they were clinging round her like two children —she, meantime, looking perfectly quiet and passive. . . . J. and H.[2] took it into their heads to come here. I think it probable offence was taken on that occasion, from what cause I know not; and as, if such be the case, the grudge must rest upon purely imaginary grounds, and since, besides, I have other things to think about, my mind rarely dwells upon the subject. If Emily were but well, I feel as if I should not care who neglected, misunderstood, or abused me. I would rather *you* were not of the number either. The crab cheese arrived safely. Emily has just reminded

[1] The Robinsons; daughters of the Rev. Edmund Robinson, of Thorp Green, Yorks, where Anne was governess and Branwell tutor for a short time.

[2] Joseph and Harry Taylor, Mary Taylor's brothers.

me to thank you for it: it looks very nice. I wish she were well enough to eat it.'

But Emily was growing rapidly worse.[1] I remember

[1] A letter to Mr. George Smith concerning Emily's illness is dated November 22, 1848:—

'I think it is to yourself I should address what I have to say respecting a suggestion conveyed through Mr. Williams on the subject of your friend Dr. Forbes.

'The proposal was one which I felt it advisable to mention to my father, and it is his reply which I would now beg to convey to you.

'I am enjoined, in the first place, to express my father's sense of the friendly and generous feeling which prompted the suggestion, and in the second place to assure you that did he think any really useful end could be answered by a visit from Dr. Forbes he would, notwithstanding his habitual reluctance to place himself under obligations, unhesitatingly accept an offer so delicately made. He is, however, convinced that whatever aid human skill and the resources of science can yield my sister is already furnished her in the person of her present medical attendant, in whom my father has reason to repose perfect confidence, and he conceives that to bring down a physician from London would be to impose trouble in quarters where we have no claim, without securing any adequate result.

'Still, having reported my father's reply, I would beg to add a request of my own, compliance with which would, it appears to me, secure us many of the advantages of your proposal without subjecting yourself or Dr. Forbes to its inconveniences. I would state Mr. Teale's opinion of my sister's case, the course of treatment he has recommended to be adopted, and should be most happy to obtain, through you, Dr. Forbes's opinion on the *régime* prescribed.

'Mr. Teale said it was a case of tubercular consumption, with congestion of the lungs; yet he intimated that the malady had not yet reached so advanced a stage as to cut off all hope; he held out a prospect that a truce and even an arrest of disease might yet be procured; till such truce or arrest could be brought about he forbade the excitement of travelling, enjoined strict care, and prescribed the use of cod-liver oil and carbonate of iron. It would be a satisfaction to know whether Dr. Forbes approves these remedies, or whether there are others he would recommend in preference.

'To be indebted to you for information on these points would be felt as no burden either by my sister or myself; your kindness is of an order which will not admit of entire rejection from any motives; where

Miss Brontë's shiver at recalling the pang she felt when, after having searched in the little hollows and sheltered crevices of the moors for a lingering spray of heather—just one spray, however withered—to take in to Emily, she saw that the flower was not recognised by the dim and indifferent eyes. Yet, to the last, Emily adhered tenaciously to her habits of independence. She would suffer no one to assist her. Any effort to do so roused the old stern spirit. One Tuesday morning, in December, she arose and dressed herself as usual, making many a pause, but doing everything for herself, and even endeavouring to take up her employment of sewing. The servants looked on, and knew what the catching, rattling breath and the glazing of the eye too surely foretold; but she kept at her work; and Charlotte and Anne, though full of unspeakable dread, had still the faintest spark of hope. On that morning Charlotte wrote thus—probably in the very presence of her dying sister:—

'Tuesday.

'I should have written to you before, if I had had one word of hope to say; but I have not. She grows daily weaker. The physician's opinion was expressed too obscurely to be of use. He sent some medicine, which she would not take. Moments so dark as these I have never known. I pray for God's support to us all. Hitherto He has granted it.'

The morning grew on to noon. Emily was worse: she could only whisper in gasps. Now, when it was too late, she said to Charlotte, 'If you will send for a doctor I will see him now.' About two o'clock she died.

'December 21, 1848.

'Emily suffers no more pain or weakness now. She never will suffer more in this world. She is gone, after a hard, short conflict. She died on *Tuesday*, the very day I wrote to you. I thought it very possible she might be with

there cannot be full acceptance there must be at least considerate compromise.'

us still for weeks; and a few hours afterwards she was in eternity. Yes; there is no Emily in time or on earth now. Yesterday we put her poor wasted mortal frame quietly under the church pavement. We are very calm at present. Why should we be otherwise? The anguish of seeing her suffer is over; the spectacle of the pains of death is gone by; the funeral day is past. We feel she is at peace. No need now to tremble for the hard frost and the keen wind. Emily does not feel them. She died in a time of promise. We saw her taken from life in its prime. But it is God's will, and the place where she is gone is better than that she has left.

'God has sustained me, in a way that I marvel at, through such agony as I had not conceived. I now look at Anne, and wish she were well and strong; but she is neither; nor is papa. Could you now come to us for a few days? I would not ask you to stay long. Write and tell me if you could come next week, and by what train. I would try to send a gig for you to Keighley. You will, I trust, find us tranquil. Try to come. I never so much needed the consolation of a friend's presence. Pleasure, of course, there would be none for you in the visit, except what your kind heart would teach you to find in doing good to others.' [1]

[1] The above letter was written to Ellen Nussey. On December 25 Charlotte wrote to Mr. Williams—

'I will write you more at length when my heart can find a little rest; now I can only thank you very briefly for your letter, which seemed to me eloquent in its sincerity.

'Emily is nowhere here now; her wasted mortal remains are taken out of the house. We have laid her cherished head under the church aisle beside my mother's, my two sisters' – dead long ago—and my poor hapless brother's. But a small remnant of the race is left—so my poor father thinks.

'Well, the loss is ours, not hers, and some sad comfort I take, as I hear the wind blow and feel the cutting keenness of the frost, in knowing that the elements bring her no more suffering; this severity cannot reach her grave; her fever is quieted, her restlessness soothed; her deep hollow cough is hushed for ever; we do not hear it in the night nor listen for it in the morning; we have not the conflict of the strangely

As the old bereaved father and his two surviving children followed the coffin to the grave they were joined by Keeper, Emily's fierce faithful bulldog. He walked alongside of the mourners, and into the church, and stayed quietly there all the time that the burial service was being read. When he came home he lay down at Emily's chamber door, and howled pitifully for many days. Anne Brontë drooped and sickened more rapidly from that time; and so ended the year 1848.

strong spirit and the fragile frame before us—relentless conflict—once seen, never to be forgotten. A dreary calm reigns round us, in the midst of which we seek resignation.

'My father and my sister Anne are far from well. As for me, God has hitherto most graciously sustained me; so far I have felt adequate to bear my own burden, and even offer a little help to others. I am not ill; I can get through daily duties, and do something towards keeping hope and energy alive in our mourning household. My father says to me almost hourly, "Charlotte, you must bear up; I shall sink if you fail me." These words, you can conceive, are a stimulus to nature. The sight, too, of my sister Anne's very still but deep sorrow wakens in me such fear for her that I dare not falter. Somebody *must* cheer the rest.

'So I will not now ask why Emily was torn from us in the fulness of our attachment, rooted up in the prime of her own days, in the promise of her powers; why her existence now lies like a field of green corn trodden down, like a tree in full bearing struck at the root. I will only say, sweet is rest after labour and calm after tempest and repeat again and again that Emily knows that now.'

CHAPTER XVII

An article on 'Vanity Fair' and 'Jane Eyre' had appeared in the 'Quarterly Review' of December 1848. Some weeks after Miss Brontë wrote to her publishers, asking why it had not been sent to her; and conjecturing that it was unfavourable, she repeated her previous request, that whatever was done with the laudatory, all critiques adverse to the novel might be forwarded to her without fail. The 'Quarterly Review'[1] was accordingly sent. I am not aware

[1] The *Quarterly Review* article was written by Miss Rigby, Lady Eastlake (1809–1893). Miss Brontë contemplated a reply, under the title of 'A Word to the *Quarterly*,' as a preface to *Shirley*, but, acting on the advice of Mr. Williams, *Shirley* appeared—in 1849—without a preface. Writing to Mr. Williams (January 2, 1849), Miss Brontë said—

'Untoward circumstances come to me, I think, less painfully than pleasant ones would just now. The lash of the *Quarterly*, however severely applied, cannot sting as its praise probably would not elate me. Currer Bell feels a sorrowful independence of reviews and reviewers; their approbation might indeed fall like a sorrowful weight on his heart, but their censure has no bitterness for him.'

And on February 4 she writes to him—

'Anne expresses a wish to see the notices of the poems. You had better, therefore, send them. We shall expect to find painful allusions to one now above blame and beyond praise; but these must be borne. For ourselves, we are almost indifferent to censure. I read the *Quarterly* without a pang, except that I thought there were some sentences disgraceful to the critic. He seems anxious to let it be understood that he is a person well acquainted with the habits of the upper classes. Be this as it may, I am afraid he is no gentleman; and, moreover, that no train-

that Miss Brontë took any greater notice of the article than to place a few sentences out of it in the mouth of a hard and

ing could make him such. Many a poor man, born and bred to labour, would disdain that reviewer's cast of feeling.'

On August 16, 1849, she writes to Mr. Williams—

'To value praise or stand in awe of blame we must respect the source whence the praise and blame proceed, and I do not respect an inconsistent critic. He says, "If *Jane Eyre* be the production of a woman, she must be a woman unsexed."

'In that case the book is an unredeemed error, and should be unreservedly condemned. *Jane Eyre* is a woman's autobiography; by a woman it is professedly written. If it is written as no woman would write, condemn it with spirit and decision—say it is bad, but do not eulogise and then detract. I am reminded of the *Economist*. The literary critic of that paper praised the book if written by a man, and pronounced it "odious" if the work of a woman.

'To such critics I would say, "To you I am neither man nor woman—I come before you as an author only. It is the sole standard by which you have a right to judge me—the sole ground on which I accept your judgment."

'There is a weak comment, having no pretence either to justice or discrimination, on the works of Ellis or Acton Bell. The critic did not know that those writers had passed from time and life. I have read no review since either of my sisters died which I could have wished *them* to read—none even which did not render the thought of their departure more tolerable to me. To hear myself praised beyond them was cruel, to hear qualities ascribed to them so strangely the reverse of their real characteristics was scarcely supportable. It is sad even now; but they are so remote from earth, so safe from its turmoils, I can bear it better.

'But on one point do I now feel vulnerable: I should grieve to see my father's peace of mind perturbed on my account; for which reason I keep my author's existence as much as possible out of his way. I have always given him a carefully diluted and modified account of the success of *Jane Eyre*—just what would please without startling him. The book is not mentioned between us once a month. The *Quarterly* I kept to myself—it would have worried papa. To that same *Quarterly* I must speak in the introduction to my present work—just one little word. You once, I remember, said that review was written by a lady—Miss Rigby. Are you sure of this?

'Give no hint of my intention of discoursing a little with the *Quarterly*. It would look too important to speak of it beforehand. All plans are best conceived and executed without noise.'

vulgar woman in 'Shirley,' where they are so much in character that few have recognised them as a quotation.

On August 29, 1849, Miss Brontë wrote to Mr. Williams concerning *Shirley*—

'The book is now finished (thank God) and ready for Mr. Taylor, but I have not yet heard from him. I thought I should be able to tell whether it was equal to *Jane Eyre* or not, but I find I cannot—it may be better, it may be worse. I shall be curious to hear your opinion; my own is of no value. I send the preface, or "Word to the *Quarterly*," for your perusal.

Mr. Williams evidently thought that the preface to *Shirley* in reply to the *Quarterly* should be written on different lines, and the author's identity as a woman be avowed. On August 31 Miss Brontë writes to him—

'August 31, 1849.

'My dear Sir,—I cannot change my preface. I can shed no tears before the public, nor utter any groan in the public ear. The deep, real tragedy of our domestic experience is yet terribly fresh in my mind and memory. It is not a time to be talked about to the indifferent; it is not a topic for allusion to in print.

'No righteous indignation can I lavish on the *Quarterly*. I can condescend but to touch it with the lightest satire. Believe me, my dear Sir, "C. Brontë" must not here appear; what she feels or has felt is not the question: it is "Currer Bell" who was insulted; he must reply. Let Mr. Smith fearlessly print the preface I have sent—let him depend upon me this once; even if I prove a broken reed, his fall cannot be dangerous: a preface is a short distance, it is not three volumes.

'I have always felt certain that it is a deplorable error in an author to assume the tragic tone in addressing the public about his own wrongs or griefs. What does the public care about him as an individual? His wrongs are its sport; his griefs would be a bore. What we deeply feel is our own—we must keep it to ourselves. Ellis and Acton Bell were, for me, Emily and Anne; my sisters—to me intimately near, tenderly dear—to the public they were nothing—worse than nothing—being speculated upon, misunderstood, misrepresented. If I live the hour may come when the spirit will move me to speak of them, but it is not come yet.'

And on the same date (August 31, 1849) she writes to Mr. George Smith—

'I do not know whether you share Mr. Williams's disapprobation of the preface I sent, but, if you do, ask him to show you the note wherein I

The time when the article was read was good for Miss Brontë; she was numbed to all petty annoyances by the grand severity of Death. Otherwise she might have felt more keenly than they deserved the criticisms which, while striving to be severe, failed in logic, owing to the misuse of prepositions; and have smarted under conjectures as to the authorship of 'Jane Eyre,' which, intended to be acute, were merely flippant. But flippancy takes a graver name when directed against an author by an anonymous writer. We call it then cowardly insolence.

Every one has a right to form his own conclusion respecting the merits and demerits of a book. I complain not of the judgment which the reviewer passes on 'Jane Eyre.' Opinions as to its tendency varied then as they do now. While I write I receive a letter from a clergyman in America, in which he says, 'We have in our sacred of sacreds a special shelf, highly adorned, as a place we delight to honour, of novels which we recognise as having had a good influence on character, *our* character. Foremost is "Jane Eyre."'

Nor do I deny the existence of a diametrically opposite judgment. And so (as I trouble not myself about the reviewer's style of composition) I leave his criticisms regarding

contumaciously persist in urging it upon you. I really cannot condescend to be serious with the *Quarterly*: it is too silly for solemnity.

'Mr. Taylor has just written; he says he shall be at Haworth on Saturday, September 8, so I shall wait with what patience I may. I am perhaps unduly anxious to know that the manuscript is safely deposited at 65 Cornhill, and to hear the opinions of my critics there. Those opinions are by no means the less valuable because I cannot always reconcile them to my own convictions. "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety."

'It is my intention to pack with the manuscript some of the books you have been so kind as to lend me—if the charge of so large a parcel will not be too burdensome for Mr. Taylor. Such works as I have not yet perused I shall take the liberty of retaining a little longer.

'Permit me to thank you for the kind interest you express in my welfare; I am not ill, but only somewhat overwrought and unnerved.'

the merits of the work on one side. But when—forgetting the chivalrous spirit of the good and noble Southey, who said, 'In reviewing anonymous works myself, when I have known the authors I have never mentioned them, taking it for granted they had sufficient reasons for avoiding the publicity'—the 'Quarterly' reviewer goes on into gossiping conjectures as to who Currer Bell really is, and pretends to decide on what the writer may be from the book, I protest with my whole soul against such want of Christian charity. Not even the desire to write a 'smart article,' which shall be talked about in London, when the faint mask of the anonymous can be dropped at pleasure if the cleverness of the review be admired—not even this temptation can excuse the stabbing cruelty of the judgment. Who is he that should say of an unknown woman, 'She must be one who for some sufficient reason has long forfeited the society of her sex'? Is he one who has led a wild and struggling and isolated life, seeing few but plain and unspoken Northerns, unskilled in the euphuisms which assist the polite world to skim over the mention of vice? Has he striven through long weeping years to find excuses for the lapse of an only brother, and through daily contact with a poor lost profligate been compelled into a certain familiarity with the vices that his soul abhors? Has he, through trials, close following in dread march through his household, sweeping the hearthstone bare of life and love, still striven hard for strength to say, 'It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth to Him good'—and sometimes striven in vain, until the kindly Light returned? If through all these dark waters the scornful reviewer have passed clear, refined, free from stain—with a soul that has never in all its agonies cried 'Lama sabachthani'—still even then let him pray with the publican rather than judge with the Pharisee.

'January 10, 1849.

'Anne had a very tolerable day yesterday, and a pretty quiet night last night, though she did not sleep much. Mr.

Wheelhouse ordered the blister to be put on again. She bore it without sickness. I have just dressed it, and she is risen and come downstairs. She looks somewhat pale and sickly. She has had one dose of the cod-liver oil; it smells and tastes like train oil. I am trying to hope, but the day is windy, cloudy, and stormy. My spirits fall at intervals very low; then I look where you counsel me to look, beyond earthly tempests and sorrows. I seem to get strength if not consolation. It will not do to anticipate. I feel that hourly. In the night I awake and long for morning: then my heart is wrung. Papa continues much the same; he was very faint when he came down to breakfast.[1] . . . Dear Ellen, your friendship is some comfort to me. I am thankful for it. I see few lights through the darkness of the present time; but amongst them the constancy of a kind heart attached to me is one of the most cheering and serene.'[2]

[1] The original letter runs—

'I wrote to Hunsworth (the Taylors), telling them candidly I would rather they did not come, as, owing to circumstances, I felt it was not in my power to receive them as I could wish.'

[2] On January 18 she writes to Mr. Williams—

'My dear Sir,—In sitting down to write to you I feel as if I were doing a wrong and a selfish thing. I believe I ought to discontinue my correspondence with you till times change, and the tide of calamity which of late days has set so strongly in against us takes a turn. But the fact is, sometimes I feel it absolutely necessary to unburden my mind. To papa I must only speak cheeringly, to Anne only encouragingly; to you I may give some hint of the dreary truth.

'Anne and I sit alone and in seclusion, as you fancy us, but we do not study. Anne cannot study now, she can scarcely read; she occupies Emily's chair; she does not get well. A week ago we sent for a medical man of skill and experience from Leeds to see her. He examined her with the stethoscope. His report I forbear to dwell on for the present—even skilful physicians have often been mistaken in their conjectures.

'My first impulse was to hasten her away to a warmer climate, but this was forbidden: she must not travel; she is not to stir from the

'January 15, 1849.

'I can scarcely say that Anne is worse, nor can I say she is better. She varies often in the course of a day, yet

house this winter; the temperature of her room is to be kept constantly equal.

'Had leave been given to try change of air and scene, I should hardly have known how to act. I could not possibly leave papa; and when I mentioned his accompanying us, the bare thought distressed him too much to be dwelt upon. Papa is now upwards of seventy years of age; his habits for nearly thirty years have been those of absolute retirement; any change in them is most repugnant to him, and probably could not, at this time, especially when the hand of God is so heavy upon his old age, be ventured upon without danger.

'When we lost Emily I thought we had drained the very dregs of our cup of trial, but now when I hear Anne cough as Emily coughed I tremble lest there should be exquisite bitterness yet to taste. However, I must not look forwards, nor must I look backwards. Too often I feel like one crossing an abyss on a narrow plank—a glance round might quite unnerve.

'So circumstanced, my dear Sir, what claim have I on your friendship, what right to the comfort of your letters? My literary character is effaced for the time, and it is by that only you know me. Care of papa and Anne is necessarily my chief present object in life, to the exclusion of all that could give me interest with my publishers or their connections. Should Anne get better, I think I could rally and become Currer Bell once more, but if otherwise I look no further: sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.

'Anne is very patient in her illness, as patient as Emily was unflinching. I recall one sister and look at the other with a sort of reverence as well as affection: under the test of suffering neither has faltered.

'All the days of this winter have gone by darkly and heavily like a funeral train. Since September sickness has not quitted the house. It is strange it did not use to be so, but I suspect now all this has been coming on for years. Unused, any of us, to the possession of robust health, we have not noticed the gradual approaches of decay; we did not know its symptoms: the little cough, the small appetite, the tendency to take cold at every variation of atmosphere have been regarded as things of course. I see them in another light now.

'If you answer this, write to me as you would to a person in an average state of tranquillity and happiness. I want to keep myself as

each day is passed pretty much the same. The morning is usually the best time; the afternoon and the evening the most feverish. Her cough is the most troublesome at night, but it is rarely violent. The pain in her arm still disturbs her. She took the cod-liver oil and carbonate of iron regularly; she finds them both nauseous, but especially the oil. Her appetite is small indeed. Do not fear that I shall relax in my care of her. She is too precious not to be cherished with all the fostering strength I have. Papa, I am thankful to say, has been a good deal better this last day or two.

'As to your queries about myself, I can only say that if I continue as I am I shall do very well. I have not yet got rid of the pains in my chest and back. They oddly return with every change of weather; and are still sometimes accompanied with a little soreness and hoarseness, but I combat them steadily with pitch plasters and bran tea. I should think it silly and wrong indeed not to be regardful of my own health at present; it would not do to be ill *now*.

'I avoid looking forward or backward, and try to keep looking upward. This is not the time to regret, dread, or weep. What I have and ought to do is very distinctly laid out for me; what I want, and pray for, is strength to perform it. The days pass in a slow, dark march: the nights are the test; the sudden wakings from restless sleep, the revived knowledge that one lies in her grave, and another, not at my side, but in a separate and sick bed. However, God is over all.'

'January 22, 1849.

'Anne really did seem to be a little better during some mild

firm and calm as I can. While papa and Anne want me, I hope, I pray, never to fail them. Were I to see you I should endeavour to converse on ordinary topics, and I should wish to write on the same—besides, it will be less harassing to yourself to address me as usual.

'May God long preserve to you the domestic treasures you value; and when bereavement at last comes may He give you strength to bear it.—Yours sincerely,

C. BRONTË.'

days last week, but to-day she looks very pale and languid again. She perseveres with the cod-liver oil, but still finds it very nauseous.

'She is truly obliged to you for the soles for her shoes, and finds them extremely comfortable. I am to commission you to get her just such a respirator as Mrs. (Heald) had. She would not object to give a higher price, if you thought it better. If it is not too much trouble you may likewise get me a pair of soles; you can send them and the respirator when you send the box. You must put down the price of all, and we will pay you in a post-office order. "Wuthering Heights" was given to you. (Mary Taylor's address I have always written "c/o Mr. Waring Taylor, Wellington, New Zealand.") I have sent her neither letter nor parcel. I had nothing but dreary news to write, so preferred that others should tell her. I have not written to (Ellen Taylor) either. I cannot write, except when I am quite obliged.'

'February 11, 1849.

'We received the box and its contents quite safely to-day. The penwipers are very pretty, and we are very much obliged to you for them. I hope the respirator will be useful to Anne, in case she should ever be well enough to go out again. She continues very much in the same state—I trust not greatly worse, though she is becoming very thin. I fear it would be only self-delusion to fancy her better. What effect the advancing season may have on her I know not; perhaps the return of really warm weather may give nature a happy stimulus. I tremble at the thought of any change to cold wind or frost. Would that March were well over! Her mind seems generally serene, and her sufferings hitherto are nothing like Emily's. The thought of what may be to come grows more familiar to my mind; but it is a sad, dreary guest.'

'March 16, 1849.

'We have found the past week a somewhat trying one; it has not been cold, but still there have been changes of

temperature whose effect Anne has felt unfavourably. She is not, I trust, seriously worse, but her cough is at times very hard and painful, and her strength rather diminished than improved. I wish the month of March was well over. You are right in conjecturing that I am somewhat depressed; at times I certainly am. It was almost easier to bear up when the trial was at its crisis than now. The feeling of Emily's loss does not diminish as time wears on; it often makes itself most acutely recognised. It brings too an inexpressible sorrow with it; and then the future is dark. Yet I am well aware it will not do either to complain or sink, and I strive to do neither. Strength, I hope and trust, will yet be given in proportion to the burden; but the pain of my position is not one likely to lessen with habit. Its solitude and isolation are oppressive circumstances, yet I do not wish for any friends to stay with me; I could not do with any one—not even *you*—to share the sadness of the house; it would rack me intolerably. Meantime judgment is still blent with mercy. Anne's sufferings still continue mild. It is my nature, when left alone, to struggle on with a certain perseverance, and I believe God will help me.'

Anne had been delicate all her life: a fact which perhaps made her father and sister less aware than they would otherwise have been of the true nature of those fatal first symptoms. Yet they seem to have lost but little time before they sent for the first advice that could be procured. She was examined with the stethoscope, and the dreadful fact was announced that her lungs were affected, and that tubercular consumption had already made considerable progress. A system of treatment was prescribed, which was afterwards ratified by the opinion of Dr. Forbes.

For a short time they hoped that the disease was arrested. Charlotte—herself ill with a complaint that severely tried her spirits—was the ever-watchful nurse of this youngest, last sister. One comfort was that Anne was the patientest, gentlest invalid that could be. Still, there were hours, days,

weeks of inexpressible anguish to be borne, under the pressure of which Charlotte could only pray; and pray she did, right earnestly. Thus she writes on March 24 [1]—

'Anne's decline is gradual and fluctuating; but its nature is not doubtful. . . . In spirit she is resigned: at heart she is, I believe, a true Christian. . . . May God support her and all of us through the trial of lingering sickness, and aid her in the last hour, when the struggle which separates soul from body must be gone through! We saw Emily torn from the midst of us when our hearts clung to her with intense attachment. . . . She was scarce buried when Anne's health failed. . . . These things would be too much, if reason, unsupported by religion, were condemned to bear them alone. I have cause to be most thankful for the strength that has hitherto been vouchsafed both to my father and to myself. God, I think, is specially merciful to old age; and, for my own part, trials, which in perspective would have seemed to me quite intolerable, when they actually came I endured without prostration. Yet I must confess that, in the time which has elapsed since Emily's death, there have been moments of solitary, deep, inert affliction, far harder to bear than those which immediately followed our loss. The crisis of bereavement has an acute pang which goads to exertion; the desolate after-feeling sometimes paralyses. I have learnt that we are not to find solace in our own strength; we must seek it in God's omnipotence. Fortitude is good; but fortitude itself must be shaken under us, to teach us how weak we are!'

All through this illness of Anne's Charlotte had the comfort of being able to talk to her about her state; a comfort rendered inexpressibly great by the contrast which it presented to the recollection of Emily's rejection of all sympathy. If a proposal for Anne's benefit was made, Charlotte could speak to her about it, and the nursing and dying sister could consult with each other as to its desira-

[1] To her old schoolmistress Miss Wooler.

bility. I have seen but one of Anne's letters; it is the only time we seem to be brought into direct personal contact with this gentle, patient girl. In order to give the requisite preliminary explanation, I must state that the family of friends, to which Ellen belonged, proposed that Anne should come to them, in order to try what change of air and diet and the company of kindly people could do towards restoring her to health. In answer to this proposal Charlotte writes—

'March 24.

'I read your kind note to Anne, and she wishes me to thank you sincerely for your friendly proposal. She feels, of course, that it would not do to take advantage of it, by quartering an invalid upon the inhabitants of B(rookroyd); but she intimates there is another way in which you might serve her, perhaps with some benefit to yourself as well as to her. Should it in a month or two hence be deemed advisable that she should go either to the seaside or to some inland watering-place—and should papa be disinclined to move, and I consequently obliged to remain at home—she asks, could you be her companion? Of course I need not add that in the event of such an arrangement being made, you would be put to no expense. This, dear Ellen, is Anne's proposal; I make it to comply with her wish; but, for my own part, I must add that I see serious objections to your accepting it—objections I cannot name to her. She continues to vary; is sometimes worse, and sometimes better, as the weather changes; but, on the whole, I fear she loses strength. Papa says her state is most precarious; she may be spared for some time, or a sudden alteration might remove her before we are aware. Were such an alteration to take place while she was far from home, and alone with you, it would be terrible. The idea of it distresses me inexpressibly, and I tremble whenever she alludes to the project of a journey. In short, I wish we could gain time, and see how she gets on. If she leaves home, it certainly should not be in the capricious month of May, which is proverbially trying to the

weak. June would be a safer month. If we could reach June I should have good hopes of her getting through the summer. Write such an answer to this note as I can show Anne. You can write any additional remarks to me on a separate piece of paper. Do not consider yourself as confined to discussing only our sad affairs. I am interested in all that interests you.'

FROM ANNE BRONTË.

'April 5, 1849.

'My dear Miss (Nussey),—I thank you greatly for your kind letter, and your ready compliance with my proposal, as far as the *will* can go at least. I see, however, that your friends are unwilling that you should undertake the responsibility of accompanying me under present circumstances. But I do not think there would be any great responsibility in the matter. I know, and everybody knows, that you would be as kind and helpful as any one could possibly be, and I hope I should not be very troublesome. It would be as a companion, not as a nurse, that I should wish for your company; otherwise I should not venture to ask it. As for your kind and often-repeated invitation to (Birstall,) pray give my sincere thanks to your mother and sisters, but tell them I could not think of inflicting my presence upon them as I now am. It is very kind of them to make so light of the trouble, but still there must be more or less, and certainly no pleasure, from the society of a silent invalid stranger. I hope, however, that Charlotte will by some means make it possible to accompany me after all. She is certainly very delicate, and greatly needs a change of air and scene to renovate her constitution. And then your going with me before the end of May is apparently out of the question, unless you are disappointed in your visitors; but I should be reluctant to wait till then, if the weather would at all permit an earlier departure. You say May is a trying month, and so say others. The earlier part is often cold enough, I acknowledge, but, according to my experience, we are almost certain of

some fine warm days in the latter half, when the laburnums and lilacs are in bloom ; whereas June is often cold, and July generally wet. But I have a more serious reason than this for my impatience of delay. The doctors say that change of air or removal to a better climate would hardly ever fail of success in consumptive cases, if the remedy were taken *in time* ; but the reason why there are so many disappointments is, that it is generally deferred till it is too late. Now I would not commit this error ; and, to say the truth, though I suffer much less from pain and fever than I did when you were with us, I am decidedly weaker, and very much thinner. My cough still troubles me a good deal, especially in the night, and, what seems worse than all, I am subject to great shortness of breath on going upstairs or any slight exertion. Under these circumstances I think there is no time to be lost. I have no horror of death : if I thought it inevitable, I think I could quietly resign myself to the prospect, in the hope that you, dear Miss (Nussey), would give as much of your company as you possibly could to Charlotte, and be a sister to her in my stead. But I wish it would please God to spare me, not only for papa's and Charlotte's sakes, but because I long to do some good in the world before I leave it. I have many schemes in my head for future practice—humble and limited indeed—but still I should not like them all to come to nothing, and myself to have lived to so little purpose. But God's will be done. Remember me respectfully to your mother and sisters, and believe me, dear Miss (Nussey), yours most affectionately, ANNE BRONTË.'

It must have been about this time that Anne composed her last verses, before 'the desk was closed, and the pen laid aside for ever.'

I.

I hoped that with the brave and strong
My portioned task might lie ;
To toil amid the busy throng,
With purpose pure and high.

II.

But God has fixed another part,
And He has fixed it well:
I said so with my bleeding heart
When first the anguish fell.

III.

Thou, God, hast taken our delight,
Our treasured hope away;
Thou bidst us now weep through the night,
And sorrow through the day.

IV.

These weary hours will not be lost,
These days of misery—
These nights of darkness, anguish-tost—
Can I but turn to Thee,

V.

With secret labour to sustain
In humble patience every blow
To gather fortitude from pain,
And hope and holiness from woe.

VI.

Thus let me serve Thee from my heart,
Whate'er may be my written fate;
Whether thus early to depart,
Or yet a while to wait.

VII.

If Thou shouldst bring me back to life,
More humbled I should be;
More wise—more strengthened for the strife,
More apt to lean on Thee.

VIII.

Should death be standing at the gate,
Thus should I keep my vow;
But, Lord, whatever be my fate,
Oh! let me serve Thee now!

I take Charlotte's own words as the best record of her thoughts and feelings during all this terrible time.

'April 12.

'I read Anne's letter to you; it was touching enough, as you say. If there were no hope beyond this world—no eternity—no life to come—Emily's fate, and that which threatens Anne, would be heart-breaking. I cannot forget Emily's death day; it becomes a more fixed, a darker, a more frequently recurring idea in my mind than ever. It was very terrible. She was torn, conscious, panting, reluctant, though resolute, out of a happy life. But it *will not do* to dwell on these things.

'I am glad your friends object to your going with Anne: it would never do. To speak truth, even if your mother and sisters had consented I never could. It is not that there is any laborious attention to pay her; she requires, and will accept, but little nursing; but there would be hazard, and anxiety of mind, beyond what you ought to be subject to. If, a month or six weeks hence, she continues to wish for a change as much as she does now, I shall (D.V.) go with her myself. It will certainly be my paramount duty; other cares must be made subservient to that. I have consulted Mr. T(eale): he does not object, and recommends Scarborough, which was Anne's own choice. I trust affairs may be so ordered that you may be able to be with us at least part of the time. . . . Whether in lodgings or not, I should wish to be boarded. Providing oneself is, I think, an insupportable nuisance. I don't like keeping provisions in a cupboard, locking up, being pillaged, and all that. It is a petty wearing annoyance.'

The progress of Anne's illness was slower than that of Emily's had been; and she was too unselfish to refuse trying means, from which, if she herself had little hope of benefit, her friends might hereafter derive a mournful satisfaction.

'I began to flatter myself she was getting strength. But the change to frost has told upon her: she suffers more of late. Still her illness has none of the fearful rapid sym-

ptoms which appalled us in Emily's case. Could she only get over the spring, I hope summer may do much for her, and then early removal to a warmer locality for the winter might, at least, prolong her life. Could we only reckon upon another year I should be thankful; but can we do this for the healthy? A few days ago I wrote to have Dr. Forbes's opinion. He is editor of the "Medical Review" and one of the first authorities in England on consumptive cases.[1] He warned us against entertaining sanguine hopes of recovery. The cod-liver oil he considers a peculiarly efficacious medicine. He, too, disapproved of change of residence for the present. There is some feeble consolation in thinking we are doing the very best that can be done. The agony of forced total neglect is not now felt, as during Emily's illness. Never may we be doomed to feel such agony again! It was terrible. I have felt much less of the disagreeable pains in my chest lately, and much less also of the soreness and hoarseness. I tried an application of hot vinegar, which seemed to do good.'

'May 1.

'I was glad to hear that when we go to Scarborough you will be at liberty to go with us, but the journey and its consequences still continue a source of great anxiety to me; I must try to put it off two or three weeks longer if I can: perhaps by that time the milder season may have given Anne more strength—perhaps it will be otherwise; I cannot tell. The change to fine weather has not proved beneficial to her so far. She has sometimes been so weak, and suffered so much pain in the side, during the last few days, that I have not known what to think. . . . She may rally again

[1] Dr. Forbes (1787–1861) was knighted and became Sir John Forbes in 1853. He was born at Cuttlebrae, Banffshire, and was educated at the Aberdeen Grammar School and Marischal College. He settled as a medical practitioner at Penzance about the time that Maria Branwell left that town to become Mrs. Brontë. In 1849 Forbes was a fashionable London doctor, physician to the Queen's Household, and a prominent investigator of mesmerism. He had edited the *British and Foreign Medical Review* from its start in 1836 until its discontinuance in 1847.

and be much better, but there must be *some* improvement before I can feel justified in taking her away from home. Yet to delay is painful; for, as is *always* the case, I believe, under her circumstances, she seems herself not half conscious of the necessity for such delay. She wonders, I believe, why I don't talk more about the journey: it grieves me to think she may even be hurt by my seeming tardiness. She is very much emaciated—far more than when you were with us; her arms are no thicker than a little child's. The least exertion brings a shortness of breath. She goes out a little every day, but we creep rather than walk. . . . Papa continues pretty well. I hope I shall be enabled to bear up. So far I have reason for thankfulness to God.'

May had come, and brought the milder weather longed for; but Anne was worse for the very change. A little later on it became colder, and she rallied, and poor Charlotte began to hope that, if May were once over, she might last for a long time. Miss Brontë wrote to engage the lodgings at Scarborough—a place which Anne had formerly visited with the family to whom she was governess.[1] They took a

[1] 'We have engaged lodgings at Scarbro',' she writes to Miss Ellen Nussey. 'We stipulated for a good-sized sitting-room and an airy double-bedded lodging room, with a sea view, and, if not deceived, have obtained these desiderata at No. 2 Cliff. Anne says it is one of the best situations in the place. It would not have done to have taken lodgings either in the town or on the bleak steep coast, where Miss Wooler's house is situated. If Anne is to get any good she must have every advantage. Miss Outhwaite [her godmother] left her in her will a legacy of 200*l.*, and she cannot employ her money better than in obtaining what may prolong existence, if it does not restore health. We hope to leave home on the 23rd, and I think it will be advisable to rest at York, and stay all night there. I hope this arrangement will suit you. We reckon on your society, dear Ellen, as a real privilege and pleasure. We shall take little luggage, and shall have to buy bonnets and dresses and several other things either at York or Scarbro'; which place do you think would be best? Oh, if it would please God to strengthen and revive Anne, how happy we might be together! His will, however, must be done, and if she is not to recover it remains to pray for strength and patience.'

good-sized sitting-room, and an airy double-bedded room (both commanding a sea view), in one of the best situations of the town. Money was as nothing in comparison with life; besides, Anne had a small legacy left to her by her godmother, and they felt that she could not better employ this than in obtaining what might prolong life, if not restore health. On May 16 Charlotte writes—

'It is with a heavy heart I prepare: and earnestly do I wish the fatigue of the journey were well over. It may be borne better than I expect; for temporary stimulus often does much; but when I see the daily increasing weakness I know not what to think. I fear you will be shocked when you see Anne; but be on your guard, dear Ellen, not to express your feelings; indeed, I can trust both your self-possession and kindness. I wish my judgment sanctioned the step of going to Scarborough more fully than it does. You ask how I have arranged about leaving papa. I could make no special arrangement. He wishes me to go with Anne, and would not hear of Mr. N——'s[1] coming, or anything of that kind; so I do what I believe is for the best, and leave the result to Providence.'

They planned to rest and spend a night at York; and, at Anne's desire, arranged to make some purchases there. Charlotte ends the letter to her friend, in which she tells her all this, with—

'May 23.

'I wish it seemed less like a dreary mockery in us to talk of buying bonnets, &c. Anne was very ill yesterday. She had difficulty of breathing all day, even when sitting perfectly still. To-day she seems better again. I long for the moment to come when the experiment of the sea air will be tried. Will it do her good? I cannot tell; I can only wish. Oh! if it would please God to strengthen and revive Anne, how happy we might be together: His will, however, be done!'

[1] Mr. Nicholls, the curate at Haworth, who afterwards became Charlotte Brontë's husband.

The two sisters left Haworth on Thursday, May 24. They were to have done so the day before, and had made an appointment with their friend to meet them at the Leeds station, in order that they might all proceed together. But on Wednesday morning Anne was so ill that it was impossible for the sisters to set out; yet they had no means of letting their friend know of this, and she consequently arrived at the Leeds station at the time specified. There she sat waiting for several hours. It struck her as strange at the time—and it almost seems ominous to her fancy now—that twice over, from two separate arrivals on the line by which she was expecting her friends, coffins were carried forth, and placed in hearses which were waiting for their dead, as she was waiting for one in four days to become so.

The next day she could bear suspense no longer, and set out for Haworth, reaching there just in time to carry the feeble, fainting invalid into the chaise which was waiting to take them down to Keighley. The servant who stood at the Parsonage gates saw Death written on her face, and spoke of it. Charlotte saw it and did not speak of it—it would have been giving the dread too distinct a form; and if this last darling yearned for the change to Scarborough, go she should, however Charlotte's heart might be wrung by impending fear. The lady who accompanied them, Charlotte's beloved friend of more than twenty years, has kindly written out for me the following account of the journey—and of the end:—

'She left her home May 24, 1849—died May 28. Her life was calm, quiet, spiritual: *such* was her end. Through the trials and fatigues of the journey she evinced the pious courage and fortitude of a martyr. Dependence and helplessness were ever with her a far sorer trial than hard, racking pain.

'The first stage of our journey was to York; and here the dear invalid was so revived, so cheerful, and so happy, we drew consolation, and trusted that at least temporary

improvement was to be derived from the change which *she* had so longed for, and her friends had so dreaded for her.

'By her request we went to the Minster, and to her it was an overpowering pleasure; not for its own imposing and impressive grandeur only, but because it brought to her susceptible nature a vital and overwhelming sense of omnipotence. She said, while gazing at the structure, "If finite power can do this, what is the . . .?" and here emotion stayed her speech, and she was hastened to a less exciting scene.

'Her weakness of body was great, but her gratitude for every mercy was greater. After such an exertion as walking to her bedroom she would clasp her hands and raise her eyes in silent thanks, and she did this not to the exclusion of wonted prayer, for that too was performed on bended knee, ere she accepted the rest of her couch.

'On the 25th we arrived at Scarborough; our dear invalid having, during the journey, directed our attention to every prospect worthy of notice.

'On the 26th she drove on the sands for an hour; and lest the poor donkey should be urged by its driver to a greater speed than her tender heart thought right, she took the reins and drove herself. When joined by her friend she was charging the boy-master of the donkey to treat the poor animal well. She was ever fond of dumb things, and would give up her own comfort for them.

'On Sunday, the 27th,[1] she wished to go to church, and

[1] On Sunday, the 27th, the day before her sister died, Charlotte wrote to Mr. Williams—

'No. 2 Cliff, Scarboro': May 27, 1849.

'My dear Sir,—The date above will inform you why I have not answered your letter more promptly. I have been busy with preparations for departure and with the journey. I am thankful to say we reached our destination safely, having rested one night at York. We found assistance wherever we needed it; there was always an arm ready to do for my sister what I was not quite strong enough to do—lift her in and out of the carriages, carry her across the line, &c.

'It made her happy to see both York and its Minster and Scarboro'

her eye brightened with the thought of once more worshipping her God amongst her fellow creatures. We thought it prudent to dissuade her from the attempt, though it was evident her heart was longing to join in the public act of devotion and praise.

'She walked a little in the afternoon, and meeting with a sheltered and comfortable seat near the beach, she begged we would leave her, and enjoy the various scenes near at hand, which were new to us but familiar to her. She loved the place, and wished us to share her preference.

'The evening closed in with the most glorious sunset ever witnessed. The castle on the cliff stood in proud glory, gilded by the rays of the declining sun. The distant ships glittered like burnished gold; the little boats near the beach heaved on the ebbing tide, inviting occupants. The view was grand beyond description. Anne was drawn in her easy chair to the window, to enjoy the scene with us. Her face became illumined almost as much as the glorious scene she gazed upon. Little was said, for it was plain that her thoughts were driven by the imposing view before her to penetrate forwards to the regions of unfading glory. She

and its bay once more. There is yet no revival of bodily strength; I fear, indeed, the slow ebb continues. People who see her tell me I must not expect her to last long; but it is something to cheer her mind.

'Our lodgings are pleasant. As Anne sits at the window she can look down on the sea, which this morning is calm as glass. She says if she could breathe more freely she would be comfortable at this moment; but she cannot breathe freely.

'My friend Ellen is with us. I find her presence a solace. She is a calm, steady girl—not brilliant, but good and true. She suits and has always suited me well. I like her, with her phlegm, repose, sense, and sincerity, better than I should like the most talented without these qualifications.

'If ever I see you again I should have pleasure in talking over with you the topics you allude to in your last—or rather in hearing *you* talk them over. We see these things through a glass darkly—or at least I see them thus. So far from objecting to speculation on, or discussion of, the subject, I should wish to hear what others have to say. By *others* I

again thought of public worship, and wished us to leave her, and join those who were assembled at the house of God. We declined, gently urging the duty and pleasure of staying with her, who was now so dear and so feeble. On returning to her place near the fire she conversed with her sister upon the propriety of returning to their home. She did not wish it for her own sake, she said; she was fearing others might suffer more if her decease occurred where she was. She probably thought the task of accompanying her lifeless remains on a long journey was more than her sister could bear—more than the bereaved father could bear, were she borne home another and a third tenant of the family vault in the short space of nine months.

'The night was passed without any apparent accession of illness. She rose at seven o'clock, and performed most of her toilet herself, by her expressed wish. Her sister always yielded such points, believing it was the truest kindness not to press inability when it was not acknowledged. Nothing occurred to excite alarm till about 11 A.M. She then spoke of feeling a change. "She believed she had not long to live. Could she reach home alive, if we prepared immediately for departure?" A physician was sent for. Her address to him was made with perfect composure. She begged him to say "how long he thought she might live—not to fear speaking the truth, for she was not afraid to die." The doctor reluctantly admitted that the angel of death was already arrived, and that life was ebbing fast. She thanked him for his truthfulness, and he departed to come again very soon. She still occupied her easy chair, looking so serene, so reliant: there was no opening for grief as yet, though all knew the separation was at hand. She

mean only the serious and reflective; levity in such matters shocks as much as hypocrisy.

'Write to me. In this strange place your letters will come like the visits of a friend. Fearing to lose the post, I will add no more at present.—Believe me yours sincerely,

'C. BRONTË.'

clasped her hands, and reverently invoked a blessing from on high; first upon her sister, then upon her friend, to whom she said, "Be a sister in my stead. Give Charlotte as much of your company as you can." She then thanked each for her kindness and attention.

'Ere long the restlessness of approaching death appeared, and she was borne to the sofa. On being asked if she were easier she looked gratefully at her questioner, and said, "It is not *you* who can give me ease, but soon all will be well through the merits of our Redeemer." Shortly after this, seeing that her sister could hardly restrain her grief, she said, "Take courage, Charlotte; take courage." Her faith never failed, and her eye never dimmed till about two o'clock, when she calmly, and without a sigh, passed from the temporal to the eternal. So still and so hallowed were her last hours and moments. There was no thought of assistance or of dread. The doctor came and went two or three times. The hostess knew that death was near, yet so little was the house disturbed by the presence of the dying, and the sorrow of those so nearly bereaved, that dinner was announced as ready, through the half-opened door, as the living sister was closing the eyes of the dead one. She could now no more stay the welled-up grief of her sister with her emphatic and dying "Take courage," and it burst forth in brief but agonising strength. Charlotte's affection, however, had another channel, and there it turned in thought, in care, and in tenderness. There was bereavement, but there was not solitude; sympathy was at hand, and it was accepted. With calmness came the consideration of the removal of the dear remains to their home resting-place. This melancholy task, however, was never performed; for the afflicted sister decided to lay the flower in the place where it had fallen. She believed that to do so would accord with the wishes of the departed. She had no preference for place. She thought not of the grave, for that is but the body's gaol, but of all that is beyond it.

'Her remains rest

'Where the south sun warms the now dear sod,
Where the ocean billows lave and strike the steep and turf-covered rock.'

Anne died on the Monday. On the Tuesday Charlotte wrote to her father; but knowing that his presence was required for some annual church solemnity at Haworth, she informed him that she had made all necessary arrangements for the interment, and that the funeral would take place so soon that he could hardly arrive in time for it.[1] The surgeon who had visited Anne on the day of her death offered his attendance, but it was respectfully declined.

'A lady from the same neighbourhood as Ellen was staying in Scarborough at this time; she, too, kindly offered sympathy and assistance; and when that solitary pair of mourners (the sister and the friend) arrived at the church this lady was there, in unobtrusive presence, not the less kind because unobtrusive.'

Mr. Brontë wrote to urge Charlotte's longer stay at the seaside. Her health and spirits were sorely shaken; and much as he naturally longed to see his only remaining child, he felt it right to persuade her to take, with her friend, a few more weeks' change of scene, though even that could not bring change of thought.

The younger servant, Martha Brown, who has been occasionally alluded to in these memoirs, who was with Miss Brontë in her last days, and who still remains the faithful servant at Haworth Parsonage, has recently sent me a few letters which she received from her dearly loved mistress: one of them I will insert here, as it refers to this time.

'June 5, 1849.

'Dear Martha,—I was very much pleased with your note, and glad to learn that all at home are getting on pretty well.

[1] The inscription on the tomb in Scarborough churchyard runs as follows:—

'*Here lie the Remains of Anne Brontë, Daughter of the Rev. P. Brontë, Incumbent of Haworth, Yorkshire. She Died, aged* 28, *May* 28, 1849.'

It will still be a week or ten days before I return, and you must not tire yourself too much with the cleaning.

'My sister Anne's death could not be otherwise than a great trouble to me, though I have known for many weeks that she could not get better. She died very calmly and gently: she was quite sensible to the last. About three minutes before she died she said she was very happy, and believed she was passing out of earth into heaven. It was not her custom to talk much about religion; but she was very good, and I am certain she is now in a far better place than any this world contains.

'I mean to send one of the boxes home this week, as I have more luggage than is convenient to carry about. Give my best love to Tabby.—I am, dear Martha, your sincere friend, C. Brontë.'

'July 1849.[1]

'I intended to have written a line to you to-day, if I had not received yours. We did indeed part suddenly; it made my heart ache that we were severed without the time to exchange a word; and yet perhaps it was better. I got here a little before eight o'clock. All was clean and bright, waiting for me. Papa and the servants were well; and all received me with an affection which should have consoled. The dogs seemed in strange ecstasy. I am certain they regarded me as the harbinger of others. The dumb creatures thought that, as I was returned, those who had been so long absent were not far behind.

'I left papa soon, and went into the dining-room: I shut the door—I tried to be glad that I was come home. I have always been glad before—except once—even then I was cheered. But this time joy was not to be the sensation. I felt that the house was all silent—the rooms were all empty. I remembered where the three were laid—in what narrow, dark dwellings—never more to reappear on earth. So the sense of desolation and bitterness took possession of

[1] To Ellen Nussey.

me. The agony that *was to be undergone*, and *was not* to be avoided, came on. I underwent it, and passed a dreary evening and night, and a mournful morrow; to-day I am better.

'I do not know how life will pass, but I certainly do feel confidence in Him who has upheld me hitherto. Solitude may be cheered and made endurable beyond what I can believe. The great trial is when evening closes and night approaches. At that hour we used to assemble in the dining-room—we used to talk. Now I sit by myself—necessarily I am silent. I cannot help thinking of their last days, remembering their sufferings, and what they said and did, and how they looked in mortal affliction. Perhaps all this will become less poignant in time.

'Let me thank you once more, dear Ellen, for your kindness to me, which I do not mean to forget. How did you think all looking at your home? Papa thought me a little stronger; he said my eyes were not so sunken.'

'July 14, 1849.[1]

'I do not much like giving an account of myself. I like better to go out of myself, and talk of something more cheerful. My cold, wherever I got it, whether at Easton or elsewhere, is not vanished yet. It began in my head, then I had a sore throat, and then a sore chest, with a cough, but only a trifling cough, which I still have at times. The pain between my shoulders likewise amazed me much. Say nothing about it, for I confess I am too much disposed to be nervous. This nervousness is a horrid phantom. I dare communicate no ailment to papa; his anxiety harasses me inexpressibly.

'My life is what I expected it to be. Sometimes when I wake in the morning, and know that Solitude, Remembrance, and Longing are to be almost my sole companions all day through—that at night I shall go to bed with them, that they will long keep me sleepless—that next morning I

[1] To Ellen Nussey.

shall wake to them again—sometimes, Nell, I have a heavy heart of it. But crushed I am not, yet; nor robbed of elasticity, nor of hope, nor quite of endeavour. I have some strength to fight the battle of life. I am aware, and can acknowledge, I have many comforts, many mercies. Still I can *get on*. But I do hope and pray that never may you, or any one I love, be placed as I am. To sit in a lonely room —the clock ticking loud through a still house--and have open before the mind's eye the record of the last year, with its shocks, sufferings, losses, is a trial.

'I write to you freely, because I believe you will hear me with moderation—that you will not take alarm or think me in any way worse off than I am.'

CHAPTER XVIII

THE tale of 'Shirley' had been begun soon after the publication of 'Jane Eyre.' If the reader will refer to the account I have given of Miss Brontë's school days at Roe Head, he will there see how every place surrounding that house was connected with the Luddite riots, and will learn how stories and anecdotes of that time were rife among the inhabitants of the neighbouring villages; how Miss Wooler herself, and the elder relations of most of her schoolfellows, must have known the actors in those grim disturbances. What Charlotte had heard there as a girl came up in her mind when, as a woman, she sought a subject for her next work; and she sent to Leeds for a file of the 'Mercuries' of 1812, '13, and '14, in order to understand the spirit of those eventful times. She was anxious to write of things she had known and seen; and among the number was the West Yorkshire character, for which any tale laid among the Luddites would afford full scope. In 'Shirley' she took the idea of most of her characters from life, although the incidents and situations were, of course, fictitious. She thought that if these last were purely imaginary, she might draw from the real without detection; but in this she was mistaken: her studies were too closely accurate. This occasionally led her into difficulties. People recognised themselves, or were recognised by others, in her graphic descriptions of their personal appearance, and modes of action and turns of thought, though they were placed in new positions, and figured away in scenes far different from those in which their actual life had been passed. Miss Brontë was struck by the force or peculiarity of the character of some one whom she knew;

she studied it, and analysed it with subtle power; and having traced it to its germ, she took that germ as the nucleus of an imaginary character, and worked outwards—thus reversing the process of analysation, and unconsciously reproducing the same external development. The 'three curates' were real living men, haunting Haworth and the neighbouring district; and so obtuse in perception that, after the first burst of anger at having their ways and habits chronicled was over, they rather enjoyed the joke of calling each other by the names she had given them. 'Mrs. Pryor' was well known to many who loved the original dearly. The whole family of the Yorkes were, I have been assured, almost daguerreotypes. Indeed, Miss Brontë told me that, before publication, she had sent those parts of the novel in which these remarkable persons are introduced to one of the sons; and his reply, after reading it, was simply that 'she had not drawn them strong enough.' From those many-sided sons, I suspect, she drew all that there was of truth in the characters of the heroes in her first two works. They, indeed, were almost the only young men she knew intimately, besides her brother. There was much friendship, and still more confidence, between the Brontë family and them—although their intercourse was often broken and irregular. There was never any warmer feeling on either side.

The character of Shirley herself is Charlotte's representation of Emily. I mention this because all that I, a stranger, have been able to learn about her has not tended to give either me, or my readers, a pleasant impression of her. But we must remember how little we are acquainted with her, compared with that sister, who, out of her more intimate knowledge, says that she 'was genuinely good, and truly great,' and who tried to depict her character in Shirley Keeldar, as what Emily Brontë would have been, had she been placed in health and prosperity.

Miss Brontë took extreme pains with 'Shirley.' She felt that the fame she had acquired imposed upon her a double responsibility. She tried to make her novel like a piece of

actual life—feeling sure that if she but represented the product of personal experience and observation truly good would come out of it in the long run. She carefully studied the different reviews and criticisms that had appeared on 'Jane Eyre,' in hopes of extracting precepts and advice from which to profit.

Down into the very midst of her writing came the bolts of death. She had nearly finished the second volume of her tale when Branwell died—after him Emily—after her Anne; the pen, laid down when there were three sisters living and loving, was taken up when one alone remained. Well might she call the first chapter that she wrote after this 'The Valley of the Shadow of Death.'

I knew in part what the unknown of 'Shirley' must have suffered, when I read those pathetic words which occur at the end of this and the beginning of the succeeding chapter:—

'Till break of day she wrestled with God in earnest prayer.

'Not always do those who dare such divine conflict prevail. Night after night the sweat of agony may burst dark on the forehead; the supplicant may cry for mercy with that soundless voice the soul utters when its appeal is to the Invisible. "Spare my beloved," it may implore. "Heal my life's life. Rend not from me what long affection entwines with my whole nature. God of heaven—bend—hear—be clement!" And after this cry and strife the sun may rise and see him worsted. That opening morn, which used to salute him with the whispers of zephyrs, the carol of skylarks, may breathe, as its first accents, from the dear lips which colour and heat have quitted, "Oh! I have had a suffering night! This morning I am worse. I have tried to rise. I cannot. Dreams I am unused to have troubled me."

'Then the watcher approaches the patient's pillow, and sees a new and strange moulding of the familiar features, feels at once that the insufferable moment draws nigh,

knows that it is God's will his idol should be broken, and bends his head, and subdues his soul to the sentence he cannot avert, and scarce can bear. . . .

'No piteous, unconscious moaning sound—which so wastes our strength that, even if we have sworn to be firm, a rush of unconquerable tears sweeps away the oath—preceded her waking. No space of deaf apathy followed. The first words spoken were not those of one becoming estranged from this world, and already permitted to stray at times into realms foreign to the living.'

She went on with her work steadily. But it was dreary to write without any one to listen to the progress of her tale—to find fault or to sympathise—while pacing the length of the parlour in the evenings, as in the days that were no more. Three sisters had done this—then two, the other sister dropping off from the walk—and now one was left desolate, to listen for echoing steps that never came, and to hear the wind sobbing at the windows, with an almost articulate sound.

But she wrote on, struggling against her own feelings of illness; 'continually recurring feelings of slight cold; slight soreness in the throat and chest, of which, do what I will,' she writes, 'I cannot get rid.'

In August there arose a new cause for anxiety, happily but temporary.

'August 23, 1849.

'Papa has not been well at all lately. He has had another attack of bronchitis. I felt very uneasy about him for some days—more wretched indeed than I care to tell you. After what has happened one trembles at any appearance of sickness; and when anything ails papa I feel too keenly that he is the *last*—the only near and dear relative I have in the world. Yesterday and to-day he has seemed much better, for which I am truly thankful. . . .

'From what you say of Mr. C——, I think I should like him very much. A—— wants shaking to be put out about

his appearance. What does it matter whether her husband dines in a dress coat or a market coat, provided there be worth and honesty and a clean shirt underneath?'

'September 10, 1849.

'My piece of work is at last finished, and despatched to its destination. You must now tell me when there is a chance of your being able to come here. I fear it will now be difficult to arrange, as it is so near the marriage day. Note well, it would spoil all my pleasure if you put yourself or any one else to inconvenience to come to Haworth. But when it is *convenient* I shall be truly glad to see you. . . . Papa, I am thankful to say, is better, though not strong. He is often troubled with a sensation of nausea. My cold is very much less troublesome; I am sometimes quite free from it. A few days since I had a severe bilious attack, the consequence of sitting too closely to my writing; but it is gone now. It is the first from which I have suffered since my return from the seaside. I had them every month before.'

'September 13, 1849.

'If duty and the well-being of others require that you should stay at home, I cannot permit myself to complain; still I am very, *very* sorry that circumstances will not permit us to meet just now. I would without hesitation come to Birstall if papa were stronger; but uncertain as are both his health and spirits, I could not possibly prevail on myself to leave him now. Let us hope that when we do see each other our meeting will be all the more pleasurable for being delayed. Dear Ellen, you certainly have a heavy burden laid on your shoulders; but such burdens, if well borne, benefit the character; only we must take the *greatest, closest, most watchful* care not to grow proud of our strength, in case we should be enabled to bear up under the trial. That pride, indeed, would be a sign of radical weakness. The strength, if strength we have, is certainly never in our own selves; it is given us.'

TO W. S. WILLIAMS, ESQ.

'September 21, 1849.

'My dear Sir,—I am obliged to you for preserving my secret, being at least as anxious as ever (*more* anxious I cannot well be) to keep quiet. You asked me in one of your letters lately whether I thought I should escape identification in Yorkshire. I am so little known that I think I shall. Besides, the book is far less founded on the Real than perhaps appears. It would be difficult to explain to you how little actual experience I have had of life, how few persons I have known, and how very few have known me.

'As an instance how the characters have been managed take that of Mr. Helstone. If this character had an original it was in the person of a clergyman who died some years since at the advanced age of eighty. I never saw him except once—at the consecration of a church—when I was a child of ten years old. I was then struck with his appearance and stern, martial air. At a subsequent period I heard him talked about in the neighbourhood where he had resided: some mentioned him with enthusiasm, others with detestation. I listened to various anecdotes, balanced evidence against evidence, and drew an inference. The original of Mr. Hall I have seen; he knows me slightly; but he would as soon think I had closely observed him or taken him for a character—he would as soon, indeed, suspect me of writing a book—a novel—as he would his dog Prince. Margaret Hall called "Jane Eyre" a "wicked book," on the authority of the "Quarterly;" an expression which, coming from her, I will here confess, struck somewhat deep. It opened my eyes to the harm the "Quarterly" had done. Margaret would not have called it "wicked" if she had not been told so.

'No matter—whether known or unknown—misjudged or the contrary—I am resolved not to write otherwise. I shall bend as my powers tend. The two human beings who understood me, and whom I understood, are gone. I have some that love me yet, and whom I love without expecting, or

having a right to expect, that they shall perfectly understand me. I am satisfied; but I must have my own way in the matter of writing. The loss of what we possess nearest and dearest to us in this world produces an effect upon the character: we search out what we have yet left that can support, and, when found, we cling to it with a hold of new-strung tenacity. The faculty of imagination lifted me when I was sinking, three months ago; its active exercise has kept my head above water since; its results cheer me now, for I feel they have enabled me to give pleasure to others. I am thankful to God, who gave me the faculty; and it is for me a part of my religion to defend this gift, and to profit by its possession.—Yours sincerely, CHARLOTTE BRONTË.'

At the time when this letter was written both Tabby and the young servant whom they had to assist her were ill in bed; and, with the exception of occasional aid, Miss Brontë had all the household work to perform, as well as to nurse the two invalids.

The serious illness of the younger servant was at its height, when a cry from Tabby called Miss Brontë into the kitchen, and she found the poor old woman of eighty laid on the floor, with her head under the kitchen grate; she had fallen from her chair in attempting to rise. When I saw her, two years later, she described to me the tender care which Charlotte had taken of her at this time; and wound up her account of how 'her own mother could not have had more thought for her nor Miss Brontë had,' by saying, 'Eh! she's a good one—she *is*!'

But there was one day when the strung nerves gave way —when, as she says, 'I fairly broke down for ten minutes; sat and cried like a fool. Tabby could neither stand nor walk. Papa had just been declaring that Martha was in imminent danger. I was myself depressed with headache and sickness. That day I hardly knew what to do, or where to turn. Thank God! Martha is now convalescent: Tabby, I trust, will be better soon. Papa is pretty well. I have the

satisfaction of knowing that my publishers are delighted with what I sent them. This supports me. But life is a battle. May we all be enabled to fight it well!'

The kind friend, to whom she thus wrote, saw how the poor overtaxed system needed bracing, and accordingly sent her a shower-bath—a thing for which she had long been wishing. The receipt of it was acknowledged as follows:—

'September 28, 1849.

'. . . Martha is now almost well, and Tabby much better. A huge monster package, from "Nelson, Leeds," came yesterday. You want chastising roundly and soundly. Such are the thanks you get for all your trouble. . . . Whenever you come to Haworth you shall certainly have a thorough drenching in your own shower-bath. I have not yet unpacked the wretch. Yours, as you deserve, C. B.'

There was misfortune of another kind impending over her. There were some railway shares, which, so early as 1846, she had told Miss Wooler she wished to sell, but had kept because she could not persuade her sisters to look upon the affair as she did, and so preferred running the risk of loss to hurting Emily's feelings by acting in opposition to her opinion. The depreciation of these same shares was now verifying Charlotte's soundness of judgment. They were in the York and North Midland Company, which was one of Mr. Hudson's pet lines, and had the full benefit of his peculiar system of management. She applied to her friend and publisher, Mr. Smith, for information on the subject; and the following letter is in answer to his reply:—

'October 4, 1849.

'My dear Sir,—I must not *thank* you for, but acknowledge the receipt of, your letter. The business is certainly very bad; worse than I thought, and much worse than my father has any idea of. In fact, the little railway property I possessed, according to original prices, formed already a small competency for me, with my views and habits. Now

scarcely any portion of it can, with security, be calculated upon. I must open this view of the case to my father by degrees; and, meanwhile, wait patiently till I see how affairs are likely to turn. . . . However the matter may terminate, I ought perhaps to be rather thankful than dissatisfied. When I look at my own case, and compare it with that of thousands besides, I scarcely see room for a murmur. Many, very many, are by the late strange railway system deprived almost of their daily bread. Such, then, as have only lost provision laid up for the future should take care how they complain. The thought that "Shirley" has given pleasure at Cornhill yields me much quiet comfort. No doubt, however, you are, as I am, prepared for critical severity; but I have good hopes that the vessel is sufficiently sound of construction to weather a gale or two, and to make a prosperous voyage for you in the end.'

Towards the close of October in this year she went to pay a visit to her friend; but her enjoyment in the holiday, which she had so long promised herself when her work was completed, was deadened by a continual feeling of ill-health; either the change of air or the foggy weather produced constant irritation at the chest. Moreover she was anxious about the impression which her second work would produce on the public mind. For obvious reasons an author is more susceptible to opinions pronounced on the book which follows a great success than he has ever been before. Whatever be the value of fame, he has it in his possession, and is not willing to have it dimmed or lost.

'Shirley' was published on October 26.[1]

[1] On October 24 she wrote to Mr. George Smith from Brookroyd, her friend's home—

'Your note, enclosing the banker's receipt, reached me safely. I should have acknowledged it before had I not been from home.

'I am glad *Shirley* is so near the day of publication, as I now and then feel anxious to know its doom and learn what sort of reception it will get. In another month some of the critics will have pronounced

When it came out, but before reading it, Mr. Lewes wrote to tell her of his intention of reviewing it in the 'Edinburgh.' Her correspondence with him had ceased for some time: much had occurred since.

TO G. H. LEWES, ESQ.

'November 1, 1849.

'My dear Sir,—It is about a year and a half since you wrote to me; but it seems a longer period, because since then it has been my lot to pass some black milestones in the journey of life. Since then there have been intervals when I have ceased to care about literature and critics and fame; when I have lost sight of whatever was prominent in my thoughts at the first publication of "Jane Eyre;" but now I want these things to come back vividly, if possible: consequently it was a pleasure to receive your note. I wish you did not think me a woman. I wish all reviewers believed "Currer Bell" to be a man; they would be more just to him. You will, I know, keep measuring me by some standard of what you deem becoming to my sex; where I am not what you consider graceful you will condemn me. All mouths will be open against that first chapter, and that first chapter is as true as the Bible, nor is it exceptionable. Come what will, I cannot, when I write, think always of myself and of what is elegant and charming in femineity; it is not on those terms, or with such ideas, I ever took pen in hand: and if it is only on such terms my writing will be tolerated I shall pass away from the public and trouble it no more. Out of obscurity I came, to obscurity I can easily return. Standing afar off, I now watch to see what will become of "Shirley." My expectations are very low, and my anticipations somewhat sad and bitter; still, I earnestly conjure you to say honestly what you think; flattery would be worse than vain; there is no consolation in flattery. As for condemnation, I

their fiat, and the public also will have evinced their mood towards it. Meanwhile patience.'

cannot, on reflection, see why I should much fear it; there is no one but myself to suffer therefrom, and both happiness and suffering in this life soon pass away. Wishing you all success in your Scottish expedition, I am, dear Sir, yours sincerely, C. Bell.'

Miss Brontë, as we have seen, had been as anxious as ever to preserve her incognito in 'Shirley.' She even fancied that there were fewer traces of a female pen in it than in 'Jane Eyre;' and thus, when the earliest reviews were published, and asserted that the mysterious writer must be a woman, she was much disappointed. She especially disliked the lowering of the standard by which to judge a work of fiction, if it proceeded from a feminine pen; and praise mingled with pseudo-gallant allusions to her sex mortified her far more than actual blame.

But the secret, so jealously preserved, was oozing out at last. The publication of 'Shirley' seemed to fix the conviction that the writer was an inhabitant of the district where the story was laid. And a clever Haworth man, who had somewhat risen in the world, and gone to settle in Liverpool, read the novel, and was struck with some of the names of places mentioned, and knew the dialect in which parts of it were written. He became convinced that it was the production of some one in Haworth. But he could not imagine who in that village could have written such a work except Miss Brontë. Proud of his conjecture, he divulged the suspicion (which was almost certainty) in the columns of a Liverpool paper; thus the heart of the mystery came slowly creeping out; and a visit to London, which Miss Brontë paid towards the end of the year 1849, made it distinctly known. She had been all along on most happy terms with her publishers; and their kindness had beguiled some of those weary, solitary hours which had so often occurred of late, by sending for her perusal boxes of books more suited to her tastes than any she could procure from the circulating library at Keighley. She often

writes such sentences as the following in her letters to Cornhill:—

'I was indeed very much interested in the books you sent.[1] "Eckermann's Conversations with Goëthe," "Guesses at Truth," "Friends in Council," and the little work on English social life pleased me particularly, and the last not least. We sometimes take a partiality to books, as to characters, not on account of any brilliant intellect or striking peculiarity they boast, but for the sake of something good, delicate, and genuine. I thought that small book the production of a lady, and an amiable, sensible woman, and I liked it. You must not think of selecting any more works for me yet; my stock is still far from exhausted.

'I accept your offer respecting the "Athenæum;" it is a paper I should like much to see, providing that you can send it without trouble. It shall be punctually returned.'

In a letter to her friend she complains of the feelings of illness from which she was seldom or never free.

'November 16, 1849.

'You are not to suppose any of the characters in "Shirley" intended as literal portraits. It would not suit the rules of art, nor of my own feelings, to write in that style. We only suffer reality to *suggest*, never to *dictate*. The heroines are abstractions, and the heroes also. Qualities I have seen, loved, and admired are here and there put in as decorative gems, to be preserved in that setting. Since you say you could recognise the originals of all except the heroines, pray whom did you suppose the two Moores to represent? I send you a couple of reviews; the one is in the "Examiner," written by Albany Fonblanque,[2] who is called the most

[1] This was probably John Oxenford's translation of Eckermann (1792–1854), made in 1849. Sir Arthur Helps's *Friends in Council*, First Series, was published in 1847. *Guesses at Truth* was written by Julius and Augustus Hare, and published anonymously in 1827.

[2] Albany William Fonblanque (1793–1872). Edited the *Examiner* from 1830. Became Statistical Secretary to the Board of Trade in 1847. Wrote *England under Seven Administrations*, 1837.

brilliant political writer of the day, a man whose dictum is much thought of in London. The other, in the "Standard of Freedom," is written by William Howitt,[1] a Quaker! . . . I should be pretty well if it were not for headaches and indigestion. My chest has been better lately.'

In consequence of this long-protracted state of languor, headache, and sickness, to which the slightest exposure to cold added sensations of hoarseness and soreness at the chest, she determined to take the evil in time, as much for her father's sake as for her own, and to go up to London and consult some physician there. It was not her first intention to visit anywhere; but the friendly urgency of her publishers prevailed, and it was decided that she was to become the guest of Mr. Smith.[2] Before she went she wrote two characteristic letters about 'Shirley,' from which I shall take a few extracts.

'"Shirley" makes her way. The reviews shower in

[1] William Howitt (1792–1879). Wrote innumerable works, of which *Visits to Remarkable Places* (1838–41) and *Homes and Haunts of the Poets* (1847) are best remembered.

[2] She wrote to Mr. Smith on November 19 as follows:—

'I am sorry that you should have had the trouble of writing to me at a time when business claims all your thoughts, and doubly sorry am I for the cause of this unwonted excess of occupation; it is to be hoped Mr. Taylor's health and strength will soon be restored to him, both for your sake and his own.

'I thank you for your kind invitation; at first I thought I should be under the necessity of declining it, having received a prior invitation some months ago from a family lately come to reside in London, whose acquaintance I formed in Brussels. But these friends only know me as Miss Brontë, and they are of the class, perfectly worthy but in no sort remarkable, to whom I should feel it quite superfluous to introduce Currer Bell; I know they would not understand the author. Under these circumstances my movements would have been very much restrained, and in fact this consideration formed a difficulty in the way of my coming to London at all. I think, however, I might conscientiously spend part of the time with my other friends. Finding me a guest at the house of a publisher, and knowing my tastes, they may and probably will suspect me of literary pursuits, but I care not for that; it would bring none of

fast.[1] . . . The best critique which has yet appeared is in the "Revue des Deux Mondes," a sort of European cosmopolitan periodical, whose headquarters are at Paris. Comparatively few reviewers, even in their praise, evince a just comprehension of the author's meaning. Eugène Forçade,[2] the

the *éclat* and bustle which an open declaration of authorship would certainly entail.

'As the present does not seem to be a very favourable time for my visit, I will defer it awhile.'

The 'other friends' were the Wheelwrights, Charlotte having continued the friendship formed in Brussels with Lætitia. 'I found when I mentioned to Mr. Smith my plan of going to Dr. Wheelwright's it would not do at all; he would have been severely hurt. He made his mother write to me, and thus I was persuaded to make my principal stay at his house,' writes Charlotte from 4 Westbourne Place, Bishop's Road (this being one of several private houses which have since that day been converted into shops), when staying with her publisher in London. The Wheelwrights lived at 29 Phillimore Place, Kensington.

[1] Letter to Miss Ellen Nussey, dated November 22, 1849.

[2] Forçade had previously reviewed *Jane Eyre* in an article which appeared in vol. xxiv., Series 5, pp. 470–94. She wrote to Mr. Williams on November 16, 1848—

'The notice in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* is one of the most able, the most acceptable to the author of any that have yet appeared. Eugène Forçade understood and enjoyed *Jane Eyre*. I cannot say that of all who have professed to criticise it. The censures are as well founded as the commendations. The specimens of the translation given are on the whole good; now and then the meaning of the original has been misapprehended, but generally it is well rendered.

'Every cup given us to taste in this life is mixed. Once it would have seemed to me that an evidence of success like that contained in the *Revue* would have excited an almost exultant feeling in my mind. It comes, however, at a time when counteracting circumstances keep the balance of the emotions even—when my sister's continued illness darkens the present and dims the future. That will seem to me a happy day when I can announce to you that Emily is better. Her symptoms continue to be those of slow inflammation of the lungs, tight cough, difficulty of breathing, pain in the chest, and fever. We watch anxiously for a change for the better; may it soon come!'

And on November 22, 1848, she wrote to Mr. Williams—

'If it is discouraging to an author to see his work mouthed over by the entirely ignorant and incompetent, it is equally reviving to hear what

reviewer in question, follows Currer Bell through every winding, discerns every point, discriminates every shade, proves himself master of the subject and lord of the aim. With that man I would shake hands, if I saw him. I would say, "You know me, monsieur; I shall deem it an honour to know you." I could not say so much of the mass of the London critics. Perhaps I could not say so much to five hundred men and women in all the millions of Great Britain. That matters little. My own conscience I satisfy first; and having done that, if I further content and delight a Forçade, a Fonblanque, and a Thackeray, my ambition has had its ration; it is fed; it lies down for the present satisfied; my faculties have wrought a day's task and earned a day's wages. I am no teacher; to look on me in that light is to mistake me. To teach is not my vocation. What I *am* it is useless to say. Those whom it concerns feel and find it out. To all others I wish only to be an obscure, steady-going, private character. To you, dear Ellen, I wish to be a sincere friend. Give me your faithful regard; I willingly dispense with admiration.'

'November 26.

'It is like you to pronounce the reviews not good enough, and belongs to that part of your character which will not

you have written discussed and analysed by a critic who is master of his subject—by one whose heart feels, whose powers grasp the matter he undertakes to handle. Such refreshment Eugène Forçade has given me. Were I to see that man, my impulse would be to say, "Monsieur, you know me; I shall deem it an honour to know you."

'I do not find that Forçade detects any coarseness in the work—it is for the smaller critics to find that out. The master in the art—the subtle-thoughted, keen-eyed, quick-feeling Frenchman—knows the true nature of the ingredients which went to the composition of the creation he analyses; he knows the true nature of things, and he gives them their right name.

'Yours of yesterday has just reached me. Let me, in the first place, express my sincere sympathy with your anxiety on Mrs. Williams's account. I know how sad it is when pain and suffering attack those we love, when that mournful guest sickness comes and takes a place in the household circle. That the shadow may soon leave your home is my earnest hope.'

permit you to bestow unqualified approbation on any dress, decoration, &c., belonging to you. Know that the reviews are superb; and were I dissatisfied with them I should be a conceited ape. Nothing higher is ever said, *from perfectly disinterested motives*, of any living authors. If all be well I go to London this week; Wednesday, I think. The dressmaker has done my small matters pretty well, but I wish you could have looked them over, and given a dictum. I insisted on the dresses being made quite plainly.'

At the end of November she went up to the 'big Babylon,'[1] and was immediately plunged into what appeared to her a whirl; for changes, and scenes, and stimulus which would have been a trifle to others were much to her. As was always the case with strangers, she was a little afraid at first of the family into which she was now received, fancying that the ladies looked on her with a mixture of respect and alarm; but in a few days, if this state of feeling ever existed, her simple, shy, quiet manners, her dainty personal and household ways, had quite done away with it, and she says that she thinks they begin to like her, and that she likes them much, for 'kindness is a potent heart-winner.' She had stipulated that she should not be expected to see many people. The recluse life she had led was the cause of a nervous shrinking from meeting any fresh face, which lasted all her life long. Still, she longed to have an idea of the personal appearance and manners of some of those whose writings or letters had interested her. Mr. Thackeray was accordingly invited to meet her, but it so happened that she had been out for the greater part of the morning, and, in consequence, missed the luncheon hour at her friend's house. This brought on a severe and depressing headache in one accustomed to the early, regular hours of a Yorkshire parsonage; besides, the excitement of meeting, hearing, and sitting next a man to whom she looked up with such admiration as she did to the author of 'Vanity Fair' was of

[1] Mr. George Smith's mother and sisters lived at the time of this visit at Gloucester Terrace, Hyde Park.

itself overpowering to her frail nerves. She writes about this dinner as follows:—

'December 10, 1849.

'As to being happy, I am under scenes and circumstances of excitement; but I suffer acute pain sometimes—mental pain, I mean. At the moment Mr. Thackeray presented himself I was thoroughly faint from inanition, having eaten nothing since a very slight breakfast, and it was then seven o'clock in the evening. Excitement and exhaustion made savage work of me that evening. What he thought of me I cannot tell.'

She told me how difficult she found it, this first time of meeting Mr. Thackeray, to decide whether he was speaking in jest or in earnest, and that she had (she believed) completely misunderstood an inquiry of his, made on the gentlemen's coming into the drawing-room. He asked her 'if she had perceived the scent of their cigars;' to which she replied literally, discovering in a minute afterwards, by the smile on several faces, that he was alluding to a passage in 'Jane Eyre.' Her hosts took pleasure in showing her the sights of London. On one of the days which had been set apart for some of these pleasant excursions a severe review of 'Shirley' was published in the 'Times.' She had heard that her book would be noticed by it, and guessed that there was some particular reason for the care with which her hosts mislaid it on that particular morning. She told them that she was aware why she might not see the paper. Mrs. Smith at once admitted that her conjecture was right, and said that they had wished her to go to the day's engagement before reading it. But she quietly persisted in her request to be allowed to have the paper. Mrs. Smith took her work, and tried not to observe the countenance which the other tried to hide between the large sheets; but she could not help becoming aware of tears stealing down the face and dropping on the lap. The first remark Miss Brontë made was to express her fear lest so severe a notice should check the sale

of the book, and injuriously affect her publishers. Wounded as she was, her first thought was for others. Later on (I think that very afternoon) Mr. Thackeray called; she suspected (she said) that he came to see how she bore the attack on 'Shirley;' but she had recovered her composure, and conversed very quietly with him: he only learnt from the answer to his direct inquiry that she had read the 'Times' article. She acquiesced in the recognition of herself as the authoress of 'Jane Eyre,' because she perceived that there were some advantages to be derived from dropping her pseudonym. One result was an acquaintance with Miss Martineau.[1] She had sent her the novel just published, with a curious note, in which Currer Bell offered a copy of 'Shirley' to Miss Martineau, as an acknowledgment of the gratification *he* had received from her works. From 'Deerbrook' *he* had derived a new and keen pleasure, and experienced a genuine benefit. In *his* mind 'Deerbrook,' &c.

Miss Martineau, in acknowledging this note and the copy of 'Shirley,' dated her letter from a friend's house in the neighbourhood of Mr. Smith's residence; and when, a week or two afterwards, Miss Brontë found how near she was to her correspondent, she wrote, in the name of Currer Bell, to propose a visit to her. Six o'clock, on a certain Sunday afternoon (Dec. 10), was the time appointed. Miss Martineau's friends had invited the unknown Currer Bell to their early tea;[2] they were ignorant whether the name was that of a man or a woman; and had had various conjectures as to sex, age, and appearance. Miss Martineau had, indeed,

[1] Harriet Martineau (1802–1876) was born at Norwich. She published *Deerbrook* in 1839. Her *Letters on the Laws of Man's Social Nature*, published in conjunction with H. G. Atkinson in 1851, caused considerable scandal not only in more orthodox circles but among Miss Martineau's old and hereditary friends the Unitarians. Many years of her later life were spent at Ambleside, in the Lake Country.

[2] Charlotte Brontë writes to Ellen Nussey (December 10, 1849), 'This evening I am going to meet Miss Martineau. She has written to me most kindly. She knows me only as Currer Bell. I am going alone in the carriage; how I shall get on I do not know.'

expressed her private opinion pretty distinctly by beginning her reply, to the professedly masculine note referred to above, with 'Dear Madam;' but she had addressed it to 'Currer Bell, Esq.' At every ring the eyes of the party turned towards the door. Some stranger (a gentleman, I think) came in; for an instant they fancied he was Currer Bell, and indeed an Esq.; he stayed some time—went away. Another ring; 'Miss Brontë' was announced; and in came a young-looking lady, almost childlike in stature, 'in a deep mourning dress, neat as a Quaker's, with her beautiful hair smooth and brown, her fine eyes blazing with meaning, and her sensible face indicating a habit of self-control.' She came, hesitated one moment at finding four or five people assembled, then went straight to Miss Martineau with intuitive recognition, and with the freemasonry of good feeling and gentle breeding she soon became as one of the family seated round the tea table; and, before she left, she told them, in a simple, touching manner, of her sorrow and isolation, and a foundation was laid for her intimacy with Miss Martineau.

After some discussion on the subject, and a stipulation that she should not be specially introduced to any one, some gentlemen were invited by Mr. Smith to meet her at dinner the evening before she left town. Her natural place would have been at the bottom of the table by her host; and the places of those who were to be her neighbours were arranged accordingly; but, on entering the dining-room, she quickly passed up so as to sit next to the lady of the house, anxious to shelter herself near some one of her own sex. This slight action arose out of the same womanly seeking after protection on every occasion, when there was no moral duty involved in asserting her independence, that made her about this time write as follows: 'Mrs. Smith[1] watches me very narrowly when surrounded by strangers. She never takes her eye from me. I like the surveillance; it seems to keep guard over me.'

[1] Mr. George Smith's mother.

Respecting this particular dinner party she thus wrote to the Brussels schoolfellow of former days,[1] whose friendship had been renewed during her present visit to London :—

'The evening after I left you passed better than I expected. Thanks to my substantial lunch and cheering cup of coffee, I was able to await the eight o'clock dinner with complete resignation, and to endure its length quite courageously, nor was I too much exhausted to converse; and of this I was glad, for otherwise I know my kind host and hostess would have been much disappointed. There were only seven gentlemen at dinner besides Mr. Smith, but of these five were critics—men more dreaded in the world of letters than you can conceive. I did not know how much their presence and conversation had excited me till they were gone, and the reaction commenced. When I had retired for the night I wished to sleep—the effort to do so was vain. I could not close my eyes. Night passed; morning came, and I rose without having known a moment's slumber. So utterly worn out was I when I got to Derby, that I was again obliged to stay there all night.'

'December 17.[2]

'Here I am at Haworth once more. I feel as if I had come out of an exciting whirl. Not that the hurry and

[1] Miss Lætitia Wheelwright.

[2] This letter is to Mr. Williams. There are two of the same date (December 17), one to Mr. George Smith and the other to his mother :—

'December 17, 1849.

'My dear Mrs. Smith,—I am once again at home, where I arrived safely on Saturday afternoon, and, I am thankful to say, found papa quite well.

'It was a fortunate chance that obliged me to stay at Derby, for by the time I had travelled so far weariness quite overpowered me; I was glad to go to bed as soon as I reached the inn; an unbroken sleep refreshed me against the next day, and I performed the rest of the journey with comparative ease. Tell Miss Smith that her little boots are a perfect treasure of comfort; they kept my feet quite warm the whole way.

stimulus would have seemed much to one accustomed to society and change, but to me they were very marked. My strength and spirits too often proved quite insufficient to the demand on their exertions. I used to bear up as long as I possibly could, for, when I flagged, I could see Mr. Smith became disturbed; he always thought that something had been said or done to annoy me—which never once happened, for I met with perfect good breeding even from antagonists—men who had done their best or worst to write me down. I explained to him, over and over again, that my occasional silence was only failure of the power to talk, never of the will. . . .

'It made me rather sad to leave you; regretful partings are the inevitable penalty of pleasant visits. I believe I made no special acknowledgment of your kindness when I took leave, but I thought you very kind. I am glad to have had the opportunity of knowing you, and, whether I ever see you again or not, I must always recall with grateful pleasure the fortnight I spent under your roof.

'Write a line to me when you have time, to tell me how you and your daughters are; remember me to them all (including good, quiet, studious little Bell); accept for them and yourself the assurance of my true regard, and believe me, my dear Madam,

'Yours sincerely,

'CHARLOTTE BRONTË.

'I enclose a note for Mr. Smith; he must have a word to himself.

'Mrs. Smith, 4 Westbourne Place.'

'December 17, 1849.

'My dear Sir,—I should not feel content if I omitted writing to you as well as to your mother, for I must tell you as well as her how much the pleasure of my late visit was enhanced by her most considerate attention and goodness. As to yourself, what can I say? Nothing. And it is as well; words are not at all needed. Very easy is it to discover that with you to gratify others is to gratify yourself; to serve others is to afford yourself a pleasure. I suppose you will experience your share of ingratitude and encroachment, but do not let them alter you. Happily, they are the less likely to do this because you are half a Scotchman, and therefore must have inherited a fair share of prudence to qualify your generosity, and of caution to protect your benevolence. Currer Bell bids you farewell for the present.

'C. B.

'G. Smith, Esq.'

'Thackeray is a Titan of mind. His presence and powers impress one deeply in an intellectual sense; I do not see him or know him as a man. All the others are subordinate. I have esteem for some, and, I trust, courtesy for all. I do not, of course, know what they thought of me, but I believe most of them expected me to come out in a more marked, eccentric, striking light. I believed they desired more to admire and more to blame. I felt sufficiently at my ease with all but Thackeray; with him I was fearfully stupid.'

She returned to her quiet home and her noiseless daily duties. I was anxious to know from her friend 'Mary' if, in the letters which Charlotte wrote to her, she had ever spoken with much pleasure of the fame which she had earned. To this and some similar inquiries Mary answers—

'She thought literary fame a better introduction than any other, and this was what she wanted it for. When at last she got it she lamented that it was of no use. "Her solitary life had disqualified her for society. She had become unready, nervous, excitable, and either incapable of speech or talked vapidly." She wrote me this concerning her late visits to London. Her fame, when it came, seemed to make no difference to her. She was just as solitary, and her life as deficient in interest, as before. "For swarms of people I don't care," she wrote; and then implied that she had had glimpses of a pleasanter life, but she had come back to her work at home. She never criticised her books to me, further than to express utter weariness of them, and the labour they had given her.'

Her father had quite enough of the spirit of hero-worship in him to make him take a vivid pleasure in the accounts of what she had heard and whom she had seen. It was on the occasion of one of her visits to London that he had desired her to obtain a sight of Prince Albert's armoury, if possible. I am not aware whether she managed to do this; but she went to one or two of the great national armouries

in order that she might describe the stern steel harness and glittering swords to her father, whose imagination was forcibly struck by the idea of such things; and often afterwards, when his spirits flagged and the languor of old age for a time got the better of his indomitable nature, she would again strike on the measure wild, and speak about the armies of strange weapons she had seen in London, till he resumed his interest in the old subject, and was his own keen warlike, intelligent self again.

CHAPTER XIX

Her life at Haworth was so unvaried that the postman's call was the event of her day. Yet she dreaded the great temptation of centring all her thoughts upon this one time, and losing her interest in the smaller hopes and employments of the remaining hours. Then she conscientiously denied herself the pleasure of writing letters too frequently, because the answers (when she received them) took the flavour out of the rest of her life; or her disappointment, when the replies did not arrive, lessened her energy for her home duties.

The winter of this year in the North was hard and cold; it affected Miss Brontë's health less than usual, however, probably because the change and medical advice she had taken in London had done her good; probably, also, because her friend had come to pay her a visit, and enforced that attention to bodily symptoms which Miss Brontë was too apt to neglect, from a fear of becoming nervous herself about her own state, and thus infecting her father. But she could scarcely help feeling much depressed in spirits as the anniversary of her sister Emily's death came round; all the recollections connected with it were painful, yet there were no outward events to call off her attention, and prevent them from pressing hard upon her. At this time, as at many others, I find her alluding in her letters to the solace which she found in the books sent her from Cornhill.

'What, I sometimes ask, could I do without them? I have recourse to them as to friends; they shorten and cheer many an hour that would be too long and too desolate otherwise; even when my tired sight will not permit me to continue reading, it is pleasant to see them on the

shelf or on the table. I am still very rich, for my stock is far from exhausted. Some other friends have sent me books lately. The perusal of Harriet Martineau's "Eastern Life"[1] has afforded me great pleasure; and I have found a deep and interesting subject of study in Newman's work on the "Soul." Have you read this work? It is daring—it may be mistaken—but it is pure and elevated. Froude's "Nemesis of Faith" I did not like; I thought it morbid; yet in its pages, too, are found sprinklings of truth.'

By this time 'Airedale, Wharfedale, Calderdale, and Ribblesdale' all knew the place of residence of Currer Bell. She compared herself to the ostrich hiding its head in the sand, and says that she still buries hers in the heath of Haworth moors; but 'the concealment is but self-delusion.'

Indeed it was. Far and wide in the West Riding had spread the intelligence that Currer Bell was no other than a daughter of the venerable clergyman of Haworth; the village itself caught up the excitement.

'Mr. ——,[2] having finished "Jane Eyre," is now crying out for the "other book;" he is to have it next week. . . . Mr. —— has finished "Shirley;" he is delighted with it. John ——'s wife seriously thought him gone wrong in the head, as she heard him giving vent to roars of laughter as he sat alone, clapping and stamping on the floor. He would read all the scenes about the curates aloud to papa.'[3] . . . 'Martha came in yesterday, puffing and blowing, and much excited. "I've heard sich news!" she began. "What

[1] Harriet Martineau's *Eastern Life* was published in 1848, after a visit to Egypt and Palestine; Francis William Newman (1805–1897), brother of Cardinal Newman, published in 1849 *The Soul: her Sorrows and her Aspirations: an Essay towards the Natural History of the Soul as the Basis of Theology*. James Anthony Froude (1818–1894) published *The Nemesis of Faith* in 1849.

[2] These are extracts from various letters to Ellen Nussey. 'Mr. ——' is Mr. Nicholls, 'John ——' is John Brown, the sexton.

[3] This passage concludes, 'He (Mr. Nicholls) triumphed in his own character. What Mr. Grant will say is another thing. No matter.'

about?" "Please, ma'am, you've been and written two books—the grandest books that ever was seen. My father has heard it at Halifax, and Mr. G(eorge Taylor), and Mr. G(reenwood), and Mr. M(errall) at Bradford; and they are going to have a meeting at the Mechanics' Institute, and to settle about ordering them." "Hold your tongue, Martha, and be off." I fell into a cold sweat. "Jane Eyre" will be read by J(ohn) B(rown), by Mrs. T(aylor), and B(etty). Heaven help, keep, and deliver me!' . . . 'The Haworth people have been making great fools of themselves about "Shirley;" they have taken it in an enthusiastic light. When they got the volumes at the Mechanics' Institute all the members wanted them. They cast lots for the whole three, and whoever got a volume was only allowed to keep it two days, and was to be fined a shilling per diem for longer detention. It would be mere nonsense and vanity to tell you what they say.'

The tone of these extracts is thoroughly consonant with the spirit of Yorkshire and Lancashire people, who try as long as they can to conceal their emotions of pleasure under a bantering exterior, almost as if making fun of themselves. Miss Brontë was extremely touched, in the secret places of her warm heart, by the way in which those who had known her from her childhood were proud and glad of her success. All round about the news had spread; strangers came 'from beyond Burnley' to see her, as she went quietly and unconsciously into church; and the sexton 'gained many a halfcrown' for pointing her out.

But there were drawbacks to this hearty and kindly appreciation which was so much more valuable than fame. The January number of the 'Edinburgh Review' had contained the article on 'Shirley' of which her correspondent, Mr. Lewes, was the writer. I have said that Miss Brontë was especially anxious to be criticised as a writer, without relation to her sex as a woman. Whether right or wrong, her feeling was strong on this point. Now, although this review of 'Shirley' is not disrespectful towards women, yet

the headings of the first two pages ran thus: 'Mental Equality of the Sexes?' 'Female Literature,' and through the whole article the fact of the author's sex is never forgotten.

A few days after the review appeared Mr. Lewes received the following note—rather in the style of Anne, Countess of Pembroke, Dorset, and Montgomery:—

TO G. H. LEWES, ESQ.

'I can be on my guard against my enemies, but God deliver me from my friends! CURRER BELL.'

In some explanatory notes on her letters to him, with which Mr. Lewes has favoured me, he says—

'Seeing that she was unreasonable, because angry, I wrote to remonstrate with her on quarrelling with the severity and frankness of a review, which certainly was dictated by real admiration and real friendship: even under its objections the friend's voice could be heard.'

The following letter is her reply:—

TO G. H. LEWES, ESQ.

'January 19, 1850.

'My dear Sir,—I will tell you why I was so hurt by that review in the "Edinburgh"—not because its criticism was keen or its blame sometimes severe; not because its praise was stinted (for, indeed, I think you give me quite as much praise as I deserve), but because after I had said earnestly that I wished critics would judge me as an *author*, not as a woman, you so roughly—I even thought so cruelly—handled the question of sex. I dare say you meant no harm, and perhaps you will not now be able to understand why I was so grieved at what you will probably deem such a trifle; but grieved I was, and indignant too.

'There was a passage or two which you did quite wrong to write.

'However, I will not bear malice against you for it; I know what your nature is: it is not a bad or unkind one,

though you would often jar terribly on some feelings with whose recoil and quiver you could not possibly sympathise. I imagine you are both enthusiastic and implacable, as you are at once sagacious and careless; you know much and discover much, but you are in such a hurry to tell it all you never give yourself time to think how your reckless eloquence may affect others; and, what is more, if you knew how it did affect them, you would not much care.

'However, I shake hands with you: you have excellent points; you can be generous. I still feel angry, and think I do well to be angry; but it is the anger one experiences for rough play rather than for foul play.—I am yours, with a certain respect, and more chagrin, CURRER BELL.'

As Mr. Lewes says, 'the tone of this letter is cavalier.' But I thank him for having allowed me to publish what is so characteristic of one phase of Miss Brontë's mind. Her health, too, was suffering at this time. 'I don't know what heaviness of spirit has beset me of late' (she writes, in pathetic words, wrung out of the sadness of her heart), 'made my faculties dull, made rest weariness, and occupation burdensome. Now and then the silence of the house, the solitude of the room, has pressed on me with a weight I found it difficult to bear, and recollection has not failed to be as alert, poignant, obtrusive, as other feelings were languid. I attribute this state of things partly to the weather. Quicksilver invariably falls low in storms and high winds, and I have ere this been warned of approaching disturbance in the atmosphere by a sense of bodily weakness, and deep, heavy mental sadness, such as some would call *presentiment*. Presentiment indeed it is, but not at all supernatural. . . . I cannot help feeling something of the excitement of expectation till the post hour comes, and when, day after day, it brings nothing, I get low. This is a stupid, disgraceful, unmeaning state of things. I feel bitterly vexed at my own dependence and folly; but it is so bad for the mind to be quite alone, and to have none with whom to talk

over little crosses and disappointments, and to laugh them away. If I could write I dare say I should be better, but I cannot write a line. However (by God's help) I will contend against this folly.

'I had a letter the other day from Miss Wooler. Some things in it nettled me, especially an unnecessarily earnest assurance that, in spite of all I had done in the writing line, I still retained a place in her esteem. My answer took strong and high ground at once. I said I had been troubled by no doubts on the subject; that I neither did her nor myself the injustice to suppose there was anything in what I had written to incur the just forfeiture of esteem. . . .

'A few days since a little incident happened which curiously touched me. Papa put into my hands a little packet of letters[1] and papers, telling me that they were mamma's, and that I might read them. I did read them, in a frame of mind I cannot describe. The papers were yellow with time, all having been written before I was born: it was strange now to peruse, for the first time, the records of a mind whence my own sprang; and most strange, and at once sad and sweet, to find that mind of a truly fine, pure, and elevated order. They were written to papa before they were married. There is a rectitude, a refinement, a constancy, a modesty, a sense, a gentleness about them indescribable. I wished that she had lived, and that I had known her. . . . All through this month of February I have had a crushing time of it. I could not escape from or rise above certain most mournful recollections—the last days, the sufferings, the remembered words—most sorrowful to me, of those who, Faith assures me, are now happy. At evening and bedtime such thoughts would haunt me, bringing a weary headache.'

[1] This little packet of letters, extracts from which are printed by Mrs. Gaskell (see p. 41), is still in the possession of Mr. Nicholls, who kindly permitted me to print them in full in *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle*.

The reader may remember the strange prophetic vision, which dictated a few words, written on the occasion of the death of a pupil of hers in January 1840:—

'Wherever I seek for her now in this world she cannot be found, no more than a flower or a leaf which withered twenty years ago. A bereavement of this kind gives one a glimpse of the feeling those must have who have seen all drop round them—friend after friend—and are left to end their pilgrimage alone.'

Even in persons of naturally robust health, and with no

> ricordarsi del tempo felice
> Nella miseria

to wear, with slow dropping but perpetual pain upon their spirits, the nerves and appetite will give way in solitude. How much more must it have been so with Miss Brontë, delicate and frail in constitution, tried by much anxiety and sorrow in early life, and now left to face her life alone! Owing to Mr. Brontë's great age, and long-formed habits of solitary occupation when in the house, his daughter was left to herself for the greater part of the day. Ever since his serious attacks of illness he had dined alone, a portion of her dinner, regulated by strict attention to the diet most suitable for him, being taken into his room by herself. After dinner she read to him for an hour or so, as his sight was too weak to allow of his reading long to himself. He was out of doors among his parishioners for a good part of each day; often for a longer time than his strength would permit. Yet he always liked to go alone, and consequently her affectionate care could be no check upon the length of his walks to the more distant hamlets which were in his cure. He would come back occasionally utterly fatigued, and be obliged to go to bed, questioning himself sadly as to where all his former strength of body had gone to. His strength of will was the same as ever. That which he resolved to do he did, at whatever cost of weariness; but his daughter was all the more

Jany 9th /50

My dear Mrs Smith

Since you are kind
enough to answer my letters, you shall
occasionally hear from me, but not
too often you shall not be "bored"
(as Mr Thackeray would say) with
too frequent a call for replies

Speaking of Mr Thackeray you ask
me what I think of his Christmas
Book I think it is like himself and
all he says and writes harsh and
kindly, wayward and wise, being-
nant and bitter, its pages are over-
shadowed with cynicism and yet they

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you shall certainly have them as
memento of "Currer Bell.

Mrs Smith
6 Westbourne Place.

anxious from seeing him so regardless of himself and his health.[1]

[1] I give here two letters, one to Mr. George Smith's mother, dated January 9, 1850, and addressed to 4 Westbourne Place :—

'My dear Mrs. Smith,—Since you are kind enough to answer my letters, you shall occasionally hear from me, but not too often ; you shall not be "bored" (as Mr. Thackeray would say) with too frequent a call for replies.

'Speaking of Mr. Thackeray, you ask me what I think of his Christmas book. I think it is like himself, and all he says and writes ; harsh and kindly, wayward and wise, benignant and bitter ; its pages are overshadowed with cynicism, and yet they sparkle with feeling. As to his abuse of Rowena and of women in general—I will tell you my dear Madam what I think he deserves—first to be arrested, to be kept in prison for a month, then to be tried by a jury of twelve matrons, and subsequently to undergo any punishment they might think proper to inflict ; and I trust they would not spare him ; for the scene of Rowena's death-bed alone he merits the extremest penalty—the poor woman is made with her last breath to prove that a narrow rankling jealousy was a sentiment more rooted in her heart than either conjugal or maternal love. It is too bad. For that scene his mother ought to chastise him.

'You suggest the election of Mr. Chorley as our champion ; no, no, my dear Madam—we will not have Mr. Chorley—I doubt whether he would be true to us ; I will tell you who would better espouse and defend our cause ; the very man who attacks us ; in Mr. Thackeray's nature is a good angel and a bad, and I would match the one against the other.

'Will you ask Mr. Smith whether the two volumes of *Violet* reached him safely ? I returned them by post, as I remembered he said they were borrowed.

'Give my kind regards to all your family circle, tell little Bell to be sure and not wear out her eyes with too much reading, or she will repent it when she is grown a woman. Believe me, my dear Mrs. Smith,

'Yours sincerely,

'C. Brontë.

'You demand a bulletin respecting the "little socks." I am sorry I cannot issue a more favourable one ; they continue much the same. Should they ever be finished, you shall certainly have them as a memento of "Currer Bell."'

The second letter is addressed to Mr. George Smith, and is dated January 15 :—

'I have received the *Morning Chronicle*. I like Mr. Thackeray's letter. As you say, it is manly ; it breathes rectitude and independence ; now and then the satirist puts in a word, but, on the whole, its tone is as

The hours of retiring for the night had always been early in the Parsonage; now family prayers were at eight o'clock, directly after which Mr. Brontë and old Tabby went to bed, and Martha was not long in following. But Charlotte could not have slept if she had gone—could not have rested on her desolate couch. She stopped up—it was very tempting—late and later; striving to beguile the lonely night with some employment, till her weak eyes failed to read or sew, and could only weep in solitude over the dead that were not. No one on earth can even imagine what those hours were to her. All the grim superstitions of the North had been implanted in her during her childhood by the servants who believed in them. They recurred to her now—with no shrinking from the spirits of the Dead, but with such an intense longing once

earnest as its style is simple. It needs a comparison between Mr. Thackeray and all the whining small fry of quill-drivers to take the full measure of his stature; it needs such a comparison as his own words suggest to discover what a giant he is (morally I mean, not physically), and with what advantage and command he towers above the Leigh Hunts, the Levers, the Jerrolds.

'I have likewise got Mr. Doyle's book in its beautiful lapis-lazuli cover. All comment on the circumstance of your sending a second copy after the first had been lost would, I feel, be quite unavailing. I leave the correction of such proceedings to the "man of business" within you: on the "close-fisted" Head of the Establishment in Cornhill devolves the duty of reprimanding Mr. G——e S——th; they may settle accounts between themselves, while Currer Bell looks on and wonders, but keeps out of the *mêlée*.

'On reflection I think it would be wiser to abstain from adding any more prefatory remarks to the cheap edition of *Jane Eyre*, for it does not appear that I am very happy in such matters; I lack Mr. Thackeray's nice quiet tact and finished ease. I am glad to hear that the bonnets suited, and regret exceedingly that it is not in my power to give any assurance of the substantial existence of Miss Helstone. You must be satisfied if that young person has furnished your mind with a pleasant idea; she is a native of Dreamland, and as such can have neither voice nor presence except for the fancy, neither being nor dwelling except in thought.

'N.B. That last sentence is not to be read by the "man of business;" it sounds much too bookish.'

more to stand face to face with the souls of her sisters as no one but she could have felt. It seemed as if the very strength of her yearning should have compelled them to appear. On windy nights cries, and sobs, and wailings seemed to go round the house, as of the dearly beloved striving to force their way to her. Some one conversing with her once objected, in my presence, to that part of 'Jane Eyre' in which she hears Rochester's voice crying out to her in a great crisis of her life, he being many, many miles distant at the time. I do not know what incident was in Miss Brontë's recollection when she replied, in a low voice, drawing in her breath, 'But it is a true thing; it really happened.'

The reader who has even faintly pictured to himself her life at this time—the solitary days—the waking, watching nights—may imagine to what a sensitive pitch her nerves were strung, and how such a state was sure to affect her health.

It was no bad thing for her that about this time various people began to go over to Haworth, curious to see the scenery described in 'Shirley,' if a sympathy with the writer, of a more generous kind than to be called mere curiosity, did not make them wish to know whether they could not in some way serve or cheer one who had suffered so deeply.

Among this number were Sir James and Lady Kay-Shuttleworth.[1] Their house lies over the crest of the moors

[1] Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth (1804–1877), a doctor of medicine, who was made a baronet in 1849, on resigning the secretaryship of the Committee of Council on Education; assumed the name of Shuttleworth on his marriage, in 1842, to Janet, the only child and heiress of Robert Shuttleworth of Gawthorpe Hall, Burnley (died 1872). His son, the present baronet, is the Right Hon. Sir Ughtred James Kay-Shuttleworth.

'Amongst others,' writes Charlotte Brontë to Miss Nussey (March 5, 1850), 'Sir J. K.-Shuttleworth and Lady S. have persisted in coming; they were here on Friday. The baronet looks in vigorous health; he scarcely appears more than thirty-five, but he says he is forty-four. Lady Shuttleworth is rather handsome, and still young. They were both quite unpretending. When here they again urged me to visit them.

which rise above Haworth, at about a dozen miles' distance as the crow flies, though much further by the road. But, according to the acceptation of the word in that uninhabited district, they were neighbours, if they so willed it. Accordingly Sir James and his wife drove over one morning, at the beginning of March, to call upon Miss Brontë and her father. Before taking leave they pressed her to visit them at Gawthorpe Hall, their residence on the borders of East Lancashire. After some hesitation, and at the urgency of her father, who was extremely anxious to procure for her any change of scene and society that was offered, she consented

Papa took their side at once—would not hear of my refusing. I must go—this left me without plea or defence. I consented to go for three days. They wanted me to return with them in the carriage, but I pleaded off till to-morrow. I wish it was well over.'

. . . . . .

To Mr. Williams Miss Brontë writes (March 16, 1850)—Mrs. Gaskell quotes a fragment of the letter in the text:—

'I mentioned, I think, that we had one or two visitors at Haworth lately; amongst them were Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth and his lady. Before departing they exacted a promise that I would visit them at Gawthorpe Hall, their residence on the borders of East Lancashire. I went reluctantly, for it is always a difficult and painful thing to me to meet the advances of people whose kindness I am in no position to repay. Sir James is a man of polished manners, with clear intellect and highly cultivated mind. On the whole I got on very well with him. His health is just now somewhat broken by his severe official labours; and the quiet drives to old ruins and old halls situate amongst older hills and woods, the dialogues (perhaps I should rather say monologues, for I listened far more than I talked) by the fireside in his antique oak-panelled drawing-room, while they suited him did not too much oppress and exhaust me. The house, too, is very much to my taste, near three centuries old, grey, stately, and picturesque. On the whole, now that the visit is over, I do not regret having paid it. The worst of it is that there is now some menace hanging over my head of an invitation to go to them in London during the season; this, which would doubtless be a great enjoyment to some people, is a perfect terror to me. I should highly prize the advantages to be gained in an extended range of observation, but I tremble at the thought of the price I must necessarily pay in mental distress and physical wear and tear. But you shall have no more of my confessions; to you they will appear folly.'

HAWORTH OLD HALL.

to go. On the whole she enjoyed her visit very much, in spite of her shyness, and the difficulty she always experienced in meeting the advances of those strangers whose kindness she did not feel herself in a position to repay.

She took great pleasure in the 'quiet drives to old ruins and old halls, situated among older hills and woods; the dialogues by the old fireside in the antique oak-panelled drawing-room, while they suited him,[1] did not too much oppress and exhaust me. The house, too, is much to my taste; near three centuries old, grey, stately, and picturesque. On the whole, now that the visit is over, I do not regret having paid it. The worst of it is that there is now some menace hanging over my head of an invitation to go to them in London during the season. This, which would be a great enjoyment to some people, is a perfect terror to me. I should highly prize the advantages to be gained in an extended range of observation; but I tremble at the thought of the price I must necessarily pay in mental distress and physical wear and tear.'

On the same day on which she wrote the above she sent the following letter to Mr. Smith.

'March 16, 1850.

'I return Mr. H——'s note, after reading it carefully. I tried very hard to understand all he says about art; but, to speak truth, my efforts were crowned with incomplete success. There is a certain jargon in use amongst critics on this point through which it is physically and morally impossible to me to see daylight. One thing, however, I see plainly enough, and that is, Mr. Currer Bell needs improvement, and ought to strive after it; and this (D.V.) he honestly intends to do—taking his time, however, and following as his guides Nature and Truth. If these lead to what the critics call art, it is all very well; but if not, that grand desideratum has no chance of being run after or caught. The puzzle is, that while the people of the South object to my delineation of Northern life and manners, the people of Yorkshire and

[1] Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth.

Lancashire approve. They say it is precisely the contrast of rough nature with highly artificial cultivation which forms one of their main characteristics. Such, or something very similar, has been the observation made to me lately, whilst I have been from home, by members of some of the ancient East Lancashire families, whose mansions lie on the hilly borderland between the two counties. The question arises, whether do the London critics, or the old Northern squires, understand the matter best?

'Any promise you require respecting the books shall be willingly given, provided only I am allowed the Jesuit's principle of a mental reservation, giving license to forget and promise whenever oblivion shall appear expedient. The last two or three numbers of "Pendennis" will not, I dare say, be generally thought sufficiently exciting, yet I like them. Though the story lingers (for me), the interest does not flag. Here and there we feel that the pen has been guided by a tired hand, that the mind of the writer has been somewhat chafed and depressed by his recent illness, or by some other cause; but Thackeray still proves himself greater when he is weary than other writers are when they are fresh. The public, of course, will have no compassion for his fatigue, and make no allowance for the ebb of inspiration; but some true-hearted readers here and there, while grieving that such a man should be obliged to write when he is not in the mood, will wonder that, under such circumstances, he should write so well. The parcel of books will come, I doubt not, at such time as it shall suit the good pleasure of the railway officials to send it on—or rather to yield it up to the repeated and humble solicitations of Haworth carriers—till when I wait in all reasonable patience and resignation, looking with docility to that model of active self-helpfulness "Punch" friendly offers the "Women of England" in his "Unprotected Female."'[1]

[1] In *Punch*, from November 3, 1849, to April 20, 1850, there appeared twenty 'Scenes from the Life of an Unprotected Female,' in dialogue and stage directions.

The books lent her by her publishers were, as I have before said, a great solace and pleasure to her. There was much interest in opening the Cornhill parcel. But there was pain too; for, as she untied the cords, and took out the volumes one by one, she could scarcely fail to be reminded of those who once, on similar occasions, looked on so eagerly. 'I miss familiar voices, commenting mirthfully and pleasantly; the room seems very still—very empty. But yet there is consolation in remembering that papa will take pleasure in some of the books. Happiness quite unshared can scarcely be called happiness; it has no taste.' She goes on to make remarks upon the kind of books sent.

'I wonder how you can choose so well; on no account would I forestall the choice. I am sure any selection I might make for myself would be less satisfactory than the selection others so kindly and judiciously make for me; besides, if I knew all that was coming it would be comparatively flat. I would much rather not know.

'Amongst the especially welcome works are "Southey's Life,"[1] the "Women of France,"[2] Hazlitt's "Essays," Emerson's "Representative Men;" but it seems invidious to particularise when all are good. . . . I took up a second small book, Scott's "Suggestions on Female Education;"[3] that, too, I read, and with unalloyed pleasure. It is very good; justly thought, and clearly and felicitously expressed. The girls of this generation have great advantages; it seems to me that they receive much encouragement in the acquisition of knowledge and the cultivation of their minds; in these days women may be thoughtful and well read, without

[1] *The Life and Correspondence of the late Robert Southey*, in six volumes, edited by his son the Rev. Charles Cuthbert Southey, was published by the Longmans in 1849–50.

[2] *Women in France during the Eighteenth Century* was by Julia Kavanagh (1824–1877).

[3] *Suggestions on Female Education*, by Alexander John Scott (1805–1866), the first Principal of Owens College, was published in 1849.

being universally stigmatised as "Blues" and "Pedants." Men begin to approve and aid, instead of ridiculing or checking them in their efforts to be wise. I must say that, for my own part, whenever I have been so happy as to share the conversation of a really intellectual man, my feeling has been, not that the little I knew was accounted a superfluity and impertinence, but that I did not know enough to satisfy just expectation. I have always to explain, "In me you must not look for great attainments: what seems to you the result of reading and study is chiefly spontaneous and intuitive." . . . Against the teaching of some (even clever) men, one instinctively revolts. They may possess attainments, they may boast varied knowledge of life and of the world; but if of the finer perceptions, of the more delicate phases of feeling, they may be destitute and incapable, of what avail is the rest? Believe me, while hints well worth consideration may come from unpretending sources, from minds not highly cultured, but naturally fine and delicate, from hearts kindly, feeling, and unenvious, learned dictums delivered with pomp and sound may be perfectly empty, stupid, and contemptible. No man ever yet "by aid of Greek climbed Parnassus," or taught others to climb it. . . .

'I enclose for your perusal a scrap of paper which came into my hands without the knowledge of the writer. He is a poor working man of this village—a thoughtful, reading, feeling being, whose mind is too keen for his frame, and wears it out. I have not spoken to him above thrice in my life, for he is a Dissenter, and has rarely come in my way. The document is a sort of record of his feelings, after the perusal of "Jane Eyre;" it is artless and earnest, genuine and generous. You must return it to me, for I value it more than testimonies from higher sources. He said "Miss Brontë, if she knew he had written it, would scorn him;" but, indeed, Miss Brontë does not scorn him; she only grieves that a mind of which this is the emanation should be kept crushed by the leaden hand of poverty—by

the trials of uncertain health and the claims of a large family.

'As to the "Times," as you say, the acrimony of its critique has proved, in some measure, its own antidote; to have been more effective it should have been juster. I think it has had little weight up here in the North: it may be that annoying remarks, if made, are not suffered to reach my ear; but certainly, while I have heard little condemnatory of "Shirley," more than once have I been deeply moved by manifestations of even enthusiastic approbation. I deem it unwise to dwell much on these matters; but for once I must permit myself to remark, that the generous pride many of the Yorkshire people have taken in the matter has been such as to awake and claim my gratitude, especially since it has afforded a source of reviving pleasure to my father in his old age. The very curates, poor fellows! show no resentment: each characteristically finds solace for his own wounds in crowing over his brethren. Mr. Donne was, at first, a little disturbed; for a week or two he was in disquietude, but he is now soothed down; only yesterday I had the pleasure of making him a comfortable cup of tea, and seeing him sip it with revived complacency.[1] It is a curious fact that, since he read "Shirley," he has come to the house oftener than ever, and been remarkably meek, and assiduous to please. Some people's natures are veritable enigmas: I quite expected to have had one good scene at least with him; but as yet nothing of the sort has occurred.'

[1] The three curates of *Shirley* were, it will be remembered, Mr. Donne, curate of Whinbury; Mr. Malone, curate of Briarfield; and Mr. Sweeting, curate of Nunnely. Mr. Donne was Mr. Grant of Oxenhope; Mr. Malone was Mr. Smith of Haworth; Mr. Sweeting was Mr. Bradley of Oakworth. Mr. Smith was succeeded in the Haworth curacy by Mr. A. B. Nicholls, who is pleasantly referred to in *Shirley* as successor to Mr. Malone.

CHAPTER XX

During the earlier months of this spring Haworth was extremely unhealthy. The weather was damp, low fever was prevalent, and the household at the Parsonage suffered along with its neighbours. Charlotte says, 'I have felt it (the fever) in frequent thirst and infrequent appetite; papa too, and even Martha, have complained.' This depression of health produced depression of spirits, and she grew more and more to dread the proposed journey to London with Sir James and Lady Kay-Shuttleworth. 'I know what the effect and what the pain will be, how wretched I shall often feel, and how thin and haggard I shall get; but he who shuns suffering will never win victory. If I mean to improve, I must strive and endure. . . . Sir James has been a physician, and looks at me with a physician's eye: he saw at once that I could not stand much fatigue, nor bear the presence of many strangers. I believe he would partly understand how soon my stock of animal spirits was brought to a low ebb; but none—not the most skilful physician—can get at more than the outside of these things: the heart knows its own bitterness, and the frame its own poverty, and the mind its own struggles. Papa is eager and restless for me to go; the idea of a refusal quite hurts him.'[1]

[1] On April 18 she wrote to Mr. George Smith—

'As you say, the dividend business had better be deferred till I come to London; I shall then have an opportunity of emulating "Mrs. Martha Struggles" by going to the Bank for myself.

'You must be kind enough to thank your mother and sisters for their friendly remembrances. Probably I shall look forward to seeing them with at least as much pleasure as they will anticipate seeing me.

But the sensations of illness in the family increased; the symptoms were probably aggravated, if not caused, by the immediate vicinity of the churchyard, 'paved with rain-blackened tombstones.' On April 29 she writes—

'We have had but a poor week of it at Haworth. Papa continues far from well; he is often very sickly in the morning, a symptom which I have remarked before in his aggravated attacks of bronchitis; unless he should get much better I shall never think of leaving him to go to London. Martha has suffered from tic-douloureux, with sickness and fever, just like you. I have a bad cold, and a stubborn sore throat; in short, everybody but old Tabby is out of sorts. When —— was here he complained of a sudden headache, and the night after he was gone I had something similar, very bad, lasting about three hours.'

A fortnight later she writes—

'I did not think papa well enough to be left, and accordingly begged Sir James and Lady Kay-Shuttleworth to return to London without me. It was arranged that we were to stay at several of their friends' and relatives' houses on the way; a week or more would have been taken up on the journey. I cannot say that I regret having missed this ordeal; I would as lief have walked among red-hot plough-

I have but a vague idea of the chances for observing society my intended visit may afford, but my imagination is very much inclined to repose on the few persons I already know, as a sort of oasis in the wilderness. Introduction to strangers is only a trial; it is the meeting with friends that gives pleasure.

'On no account should you have dreamed that I was coming to town; I confess with shame that I have so much superstition in my nature as makes me reluctant to hear of the fulfilment of my dream, however pleasant; if the good dreams come true, so may the bad ones, and we have more of the latter than of the former.

'That there are certain organisations liable to anticipating impressions in the form of dream or presentiment I half believe, but that you, a man of business, have any right to be one of these I wholly deny. "No prophet can come out of Nazareth" (*i.e.* Cornhill).'

shares; but I do regret one great treat, which I shall now miss. Next Wednesday is the anniversary dinner of the Royal Literary Fund Society, held in Freemasons' Hall. Octavian Blewitt, the secretary, offered me a ticket for the ladies' gallery.[1] I should have seen all the great literati and artists gathered in the hall below, and heard them speak; Thackeray and Dickens are always present among the rest. This cannot now be. I don't think all London can afford another sight to me so interesting.'

It became requisite, however, before long, that she should go to London on business; and, as Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth was detained in the country by indisposition, she accepted Mrs. Smith's invitation to stay quietly at her house while she transacted her affairs.

In the interval between the relinquishment of the first plan and the adoption of the second she wrote the following letter to one who was much valued among her literary friends:[2]—

'May 22.

'I had thought to bring the "Leader" and the "Athenæum" myself this time, and not to have to send them by post, but it turns out otherwise; my journey to London is again postponed, and this time indefinitely. Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth's state of health is the cause—a cause, I fear, not likely to be soon removed. . . . Once more, then, I settle myself down in the quietude of Haworth Parsonage, with books for my household companions and an occasional letter for a visitor; a mute society, but neither quarrelsome, nor vulgarising, nor unimproving.

'One of the pleasures I had promised myself consisted in asking you several questions about the "Leader," which is really, in its way, an interesting paper. I wanted, amongst

[1] The custom of admitting ladies to the gallery when the dinner is over, in order that they may listen to the speeches, still obtains at Royal Literary Fund dinners.

[2] James Taylor.

other things, to ask you the real names of some of the contributors, and also what Lewes writes besides his "Apprenticeship of Life." I always think the article headed "Literature" is his. Some of the communications in the "Open Council" department are odd productions; but it seems to me very fair and right to admit them. Is not the system of the paper altogether a novel one? I do not remember seeing anything precisely like it before.

'I have just received yours of this morning; thank you for the enclosed note. The longings for liberty and leisure, which May sunshine wakens in you, stir my sympathy. I am afraid Cornhill is little better than a prison for its inmates on warm spring or summer days. It is a pity to think of you all toiling at your desks in such genial weather as this. For my part, I am free to walk on the moors; but when I go out there alone everything reminds me of the times when others were with me, and then the moors seem a wilderness, featureless, solitary, saddening. My sister Emily had a particular love for them, and there is not a knoll of heather, not a branch of fern, not a young bilberry leaf, not a fluttering lark or linnet, but reminds me of her. The distant prospects were Anne's delight, and when I look round she is in the blue tints, the pale mists, the waves and shadows of the horizon. In the hill-country silence their poetry comes by lines and stanzas into my mind: once I loved it; now I dare not read it, and am driven often to wish I could taste one draught of oblivion, and forget much that, while mind remains, I never shall forget. Many people seem to recall their departed relatives with a sort of melancholy complacency, but I think these have not watched them through lingering sickness, nor witnessed their last moments: it is these reminiscences that stand by your bedside at night, and rise at your pillow in the morning. At the end of all, however, exists the Great Hope. Eternal Life is theirs now.'

She had to write many letters about this time, to authors

who sent her their books, and strangers who expressed their admiration of her own. The following was in reply to one of the latter class, and was addressed to a young man at Cambridge:—

'May 23, 1850.

'Apologies are indeed unnecessary for a "reality of feeling, for a genuine, unaffected impulse of the spirit," such as prompted you to write the letter which I now briefly acknowledge.

'Certainly it is "something to me" that what I write should be acceptable to the feeling heart and refined intellect; undoubtedly it is much to me that my creations (such as they are) should find harbourage, appreciation, indulgence at any friendly hand, or from any generous mind. You are very welcome to take Jane, Caroline, and Shirley for your sisters, and I trust they will often speak to their adopted brother when he is solitary, and soothe him when he is sad. If they cannot make themselves at home in a thoughtful, sympathetic mind, and diffuse through its twilight a cheering domestic glow, it is their fault; they are not, in that case, so amiable, so benignant, not so *real* as they ought to be. If they *can*, and can find household altars in human hearts, they will fulfil the best design of their creation in therein maintaining a genial flame, which shall warm but not scorch, light but not dazzle.

'What does it matter that part of your pleasure in such beings has its source in the poetry of your own youth rather than any magic of theirs? What that perhaps, ten years hence, you may smile to remember your present recollections, and view under another light both "Currer Bell" and his writings? To me this consideration does not detract from the value of what you now feel. Youth has its romance, and maturity its wisdom, as morning and spring have their freshness, noon and summer their power, night and winter their repose. Each attribute is good in its own season. Your letter gave me pleasure, and I thank you for it.

'Currer Bell.'

Miss Brontë went up to town at the beginning of June,[1] and much enjoyed her stay there; seeing very few persons, according to the agreement she made before she went; and limiting her visit to a fortnight, dreading the feverishness and exhaustion which were the inevitable consequences of the slightest excitement upon her susceptible frame.

'June 12.

'Since I wrote to you last I have not had many moments to myself, except such as it was absolutely necessary to give to rest. On the whole, however, I have thus far

[1] On May 25 she wrote to Mrs. Smith, now residing at 76 Gloucester Terrace—

'You shall hear exactly how I am situated. Yesterday's post brought me a note from Sir J. K.-Shuttleworth, intimating that he is something better, reminding me that my visit is only postponed, and requesting an assurance to the effect that I will keep myself disengaged, adding these words: "Promise me that your first venture in this oceanic life shall be with me." As the note betrayed much of that nervous anxiety inseparable from his state of health, I hastened to give him this promise; this, you will perceive, ties me down for the present.

'I consider it, however, very doubtful whether he will be well enough to render my visit advisable; and even should I go, still my conviction is that a brief stay will seem to me the best. In that case, after a few days with my "fashionable friends," as you call them, I believe I should be excessively disposed, and probably profoundly thankful, to subside into any quiet corner of your drawing-room where I might find a chair of suitable height.

'I am sorry you have changed your residence, as I shall now again lose my way in going up and down stairs, and stand in great tribulation, contemplating several doors and not knowing which to open.

'I regret that my answer to your kind note must be so inconclusive; the lapse of a fortnight or three weeks will probably facilitate a decision. In the meantime, with kindest regards to your family circle . . .

'Any peculant post-office clerk who shall mistake the contents of this letter for a bank note will find himself in the wrong box. You see they are finished.' *

* The reference is to a pair of baby's socks that Miss Brontë had knitted.

got on very well, suffering much less from exhaustion than I did last time.

'Of course I cannot give you in a letter a regular chronicle of how my time has been spent. I can only just notify what I deem three of its chief incidents—a sight of the Duke of Wellington at the Chapel Royal (he is a real grand old man), a visit to the House of Commons (which I hope to describe to you some day when I see you), and last, not least, an interview with Mr. Thackeray. He made me a morning call, and sat about two hours. Mr. Smith only was in the room the whole time. He described it afterwards as a "queer scene," and I suppose it was. The giant sate before me; I was moved to speak to him of some of his shortcomings (literary of course); one by one the faults came into my head, and one by one I brought them out, and sought some explanation or defence. He did defend himself, like a great Turk and heathen—that is to say, the excuses were often worse than the crime itself. The matter ended in decent amity; if all be well I am to dine at his house this evening.

'I have seen Lewes too.[1] . . . I could not feel otherwise to him than half sadly, half tenderly—a queer word that last, but I use it because the aspect of Lewes's face almost moves me to tears; it is so wonderfully like Emily—her eyes, her features, the very nose, the somewhat prominent mouth, the forehead—even, at moments, the expression; whatever Lewes says, I believe I cannot hate him. Another likeness I have seen, too, that touched me sorrowfully. You remember my speaking of a Miss Kavanagh,[2] a young authoress, who supported her mother by writing? Hearing

[1] The omitted passage runs –'He is a man with both weaknesses and sins, but, unless I err greatly, the foundation of his nature is not bad, and were he almost a fiend in character I could not feel,' &c. (letter to Miss Ellen Nussey, dated June 12, 1850). Mrs. Gaskell omits a line or two. Lewes described Charlotte Brontë as 'a little, plain, provincial, sickly-looking old maid' (*Life of George Eliot*, by J. W. Cross).

[2] Julia Kavanagh, who is here compared with Martha Taylor, was an Irish writer who was born at Thurles, co. Tipperary, in 1824, and died at Nice in 1877. *Madelaine* and *Nathalie* were her principal works.

that she had a longing to see me, I called on her yesterday . . . She met me half frankly, half tremblingly; we sat down together, and when I had talked with her five minutes her face was no longer strange, but mournfully familiar—it was Martha[1] in every lineament. I shall try to find a moment to see her again. . . . I do not intend to stay here, at the furthest, more than a week longer; but at the end of that time I cannot go home, for the house at Haworth is just now unroofed; repairs were become necessary.'

That same day, June 12, she wrote Martha the following letter. I give these letters with particular pleasure, as they show her peculiarly womanly character; and the care with which they have been preserved, and the reverence with which they are looked upon, serve to give the lie to Rochefoucauld's celebrated maxim. Charlotte Brontë was a heroine to her servant Martha—and to those who knew her best.

'London: June 15, 1850.

'Dear Martha,—I have not forgotten my promise of writing to you, though a multitude and variety of engagements have hitherto prevented me from fulfilling it.

'It appears, from a letter I received from papa this morning, that you are now all in the bustle of unroofing; and I look with much anxiety on a somewhat cloudy sky, hoping and trusting that it will not rain till all is covered in.

'You and Martha Redman are to take care not to break your backs with attempting to lift and carry heavy weights; also you are not foolishly to run into draughts, go out without caps or bonnets, or otherwise take measures to make yourselves ill. I am rather curious to know how you have managed about a sleeping-place for yourself and Tabby.

'You must not expect that I should give you any particular description of London, as that would take up a good deal of time, and I have only a few minutes to spare.

[1] The friend of her youth, who died at Brussels (*Note by Mrs. Gaskell*).

I shall merely say that it is a Babylon of a place, and just now particularly gay and noisy, as this is what is called the height of the London season, and all the fine people are in town. I saw a good many lords and ladies at the Opera a few nights since, and, except for their elegant dresses, do not think them either much better or much worse than other people.

'In answer to this you may, when you have time, write me a few lines, in which you may say how papa is, how you and Tabby are, how the house is getting on, and how Mr. Nicholls prospers.

'With kind regards to Tabby, and Martha Redman, I am, dear Martha, your sincere friend, C. BRONTË.'

She soon followed her letter to the friend to whom it was written; but her visit was a very short one, for, in accordance with a plan made before leaving London, she went on to Edinburgh to join the friends with whom she had been staying in town. She remained only a few days in Scotland, and those were principally spent in Edinburgh, with which she was delighted, calling London a 'dreary place' in comparison.

'My stay in Scotland,' she wrote some weeks later,[1] 'was short, and what I saw was chiefly comprised in Edinburgh and the neighbourhood, in Abbotsford, and in Melrose, for I was obliged to relinquish my first intention of going from Glasgow to Oban, and thence through a portion of the Highlands; but though the time was brief, and the view of objects limited, I found such a charm of situation, association, and circumstance, that I think the enjoyment experienced in that little space equalled in degree, and excelled in kind, all which London yielded during a month's sojourn. Edinburgh compared to London is like a vivid page of history compared to a large dull treatise on political economy; and as to

[1] To Miss Lætitia Wheelwright. The letter is dated Haworth, July 30, 1850.

Melrose and Abbotsford, the very names possess music and magic.'

And again, in a letter to a different correspondent,[1] she says—

'I would not write to you immediately on my arrival at home, because each return to this old house brings with it a phase of feeling which it is better to pass through quietly before beginning to indite letters. The six weeks of change and enjoyment are past, but they are not lost; memory took a sketch of each as it went by, and, especially, a distinct daguerreotype of the two days I spent in Scotland. Those were two very pleasant days. I always liked Scotland as an idea, but now, as a reality, I like it far better; it furnished me with some hours as happy almost as any I ever spent. Do not fear, however, that I am going to bore you with description; you will, before now, have received a pithy and pleasant report of all things, to which any addition of mine would be superfluous. My present endeavours are directed towards recalling my thoughts, cropping their wings, drilling them into correct discipline, and forcing them to settle to some useful work: they are idle, and keep taking the train down to London, or making a foray over the Border—especially are they prone to perpetrate that last excursion; and who, indeed, that has once seen Edinburgh, with its couchant crag-lion, but must see it again in dreams, walking or sleeping? My dear Sir, do not think I blaspheme when I tell you that your great London, as compared to Dun-Edin, "mine own romantic town," is as prose compared to poetry, or as a great rumbling, rambling, heavy epic compared to a lyric, brief, bright, clear, and vital as a flash of lightning. You have nothing like Scott's monument, or if you had that, and all the glories of architecture assembled together, you have nothing like Arthur's Seat, and above all you have not the Scotch national character; and it is that grand character after all which gives the land its true charm, its true greatness.'

[1] Mr. W. Smith Williams.

On her return from Scotland she again spent a few days with her friends,[1] and then made her way to Haworth.

'July 15.[2]

'I got home very well, and full glad was I that no insuperable obstacle had deferred my return one single day

[1] At Brookroyd with the Nusseys. From Brookroyd she writes to Mr. George Smith on June 27—

'It is written that I should not meet you at Tarbet, and at this perversity of the Fates I should be much more concerned than I am if I did not feel very certain that the loss in the matter will be chiefly my own. Of your three plans the last is the only one found practicable; Edinburgh is the true Philippi, and there I hope (D.V.) to see you again next Wednesday.

'I left Sarah much better, but I think your mother had decided against her going to Scotland, thinking the journey too long.

'Before I left London I had the opportunity of bidding Mr. Thackeray good-bye without going to his house for the purpose, and of this I was very glad.

'My call on Mrs. and Miss —— proved ineffectual, as the two ladies were gone out of town for the day, a circumstance keenly to be regretted, as I thus lose the pleasure of communicating a few words of "latest intelligence" where they would be so acceptable.

'With kind regards to your sister, and hopes that she has thus far borne her journey well.'

She wrote to Mrs. Smith on June 28—

'I arrived here safely about four o'clock on Tuesday afternoon, having performed the journey with less inconvenience from headache, &c., than I ever remember to have experienced before; nor was I ill the next day.

'It is now settled that I may go to Edinburgh, but not to Tarbet, and I have written to Mr. Smith to that effect. I only hope he will not be at all disappointed; and indeed, as he is now in the full excitement of his term, the change of plan will probably appear of no consequence.

'I could fill a page or two with acknowledgments of your kindness to me while in London, but I don't think you would care to hear much on the subject; I will only say that I never remember to have enjoyed myself more in the same length of time. With love to Sarah and Bell believe me, my dear Mrs. Smith.' . . .

[2] To Miss Ellen Nussey.

longer. Just at the foot of Bridgehouse Hill I met John (Greenwood), staff in hand; he fortunately saw me in the cab, stopped, and informed me he was setting off to B(rookroyd), by Mr. Brontë's orders, to see how I was, for that he had been quite miserable ever since he got Miss (Nussey)'s letter. I found, on my arrival, that papa had worked himself up to a sad pitch of nervous excitement and alarm, in which Martha and Tabby were but too obviously joining him. . . . The house looks very clean, and, I think, is not damp; there is, however, still a great deal to do in the way of settling and arranging, enough to keep me disagreeably busy for some time to come. I was truly thankful to find papa pretty well, but I fear he is just beginning to show symptoms of a cold: my cold continues better. . . . An article in a newspaper I found awaiting me on my arrival amused me; it was a paper published while I was in London. I enclose it to give you a laugh, it professes to be written by an author jealous of authoresses. I do not know who he is, but he must be one of those I met.[1] . . . The "ugly men," giving themselves "Rochester airs," is no bad hit; some of those alluded to will not like it.'

While Miss Brontë was staying in London she was induced to sit for her portrait to Richmond. It is a crayon drawing; in my judgment an admirable likeness, though, of course, there is some difference of opinion on the subject; and, as usual, those best acquainted with the original were least satisfied with the resemblance.[2] Mr. Brontë thought

[1] The omitted words are 'I saw Geraldine Jewsbury and Mrs. Crowe.'

[2] The portrait, which has been reproduced three separate times, is, as has been said already, the only extant likeness of Miss Brontë. It was engraved for the earlier editions of Mrs. Gaskell's *Memoir*, photographed and reproduced in photogravure in *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle*, and sent over from Ireland for reproduction in the edition of *Jane Eyre* with which this volume is issued. The portrait was the gift of Mr. George Smith to Mr. Brontë (see note, p. 57). Other portraits, including one that was long in the possession of Martha Brown's

that it looked older than Charlotte did, and that her features had not been flattered; but he acknowledged that the expression was wonderfully good and lifelike.[1] She sent the

family, are declared by Mr. Nicholls to be copies of Richmond's portrait slightly altered. Patrick Brontë's portrait of his sister was destroyed, and the Bradford artist-friends of Branwell had left the neighbourhood before Charlotte became sufficiently famous to make a portrait desirable.

[1] She wrote to Mr. George Smith on July 27—

'Papa will write and thank you himself for the portrait when it arrives. As for me, you know, a standing interdict seals my lips.

'You thought inaccurately about the copy of the picture as far as my feelings are concerned, and yet you judged rightly on the whole; for it is my intention that the original drawing shall one day return to your hands. As the production of a true artist it will always have a certain worth, independently of subject.

'I owe you two debts: I did not pay for my cards, nor for the power of attorney. Let me request you to be at once good and just, and tell me to what these little items amounted.

'Were you still in Glencoe, or even in Edinburgh, I might write you a longer and more discursive letter, but, mindful of the "fitness of things" and of the effect of locality, reverent too of the claims of business, I will detain your attention no longer.

'Tell your sister Eliza I am truly glad to hear that she has derived so much benefit from her excursion; remember me very kindly to her your mother, and the rest of your circle.'

The letter that Mr. Brontë himself wrote in acknowledgment of Mr. Smith's gifts is fittingly given here.

'Haworth, near Keighley.
'August 2, 1850.

'My dear Sir,—The two portraits have, at length, safely arrived, and have been as safely hung up, in the best light and most favourable position. Without flattery the artist, in the portrait of my daughter, has fully proved that the fame which he has acquired has been fairly earned. Without ostentatious display, with admirable tact and delicacy, he has produced a correct likeness, and succeeded in a graphic representation of mind as well as matter, and with only black and white has given prominence and seeming life, and speech, and motion. I may be partial, and perhaps somewhat enthusiastic, in this case, but in looking on the picture, which improves upon acquaintance, as all real works of art do,

following amusing account of the arrival of the portrait to the donor:—

'August 1.

'The little box for me came at the same time as the large one for papa. When you first told me that you had had the Duke's picture framed, and had given it to me, I felt half provoked with you for performing such a work of supererogation, but now, when I see it again, I cannot but acknowledge that, in so doing, you were felicitously inspired. It is his very image, and, as papa said when he saw it, scarcely in the least like the ordinary portraits; not only the expression, but even the form of the head is different, and of a far nobler character. I esteem it a treasure. The lady who left the parcel for me was, it seems, Mrs. Gore.[1] The parcel contained one of her works, "The Hamiltons," and a very civil and friendly note, in which I find myself addressed as "Dear Jane." Papa seems much pleased with the portrait, as do the few other persons who have seen it, I fancy I see strong indications of the genius of the author of *Shirley* and *Jane Eyre*.

'The portrait of the Duke of Wellington of all which I have seen comes the nearest to my preconceived idea of that great man, to whom Europe, and the other portions of the civilised world, in the most dangerous crisis of their affairs, entrusted their cause, and in whom, under Providence, they did not trust in vain. It now remains for me only to thank you, which I do most sincerely. For the sake of the giver as well as the gift I will lay the portraits up for life amongst my most highly valued treasures, and have only to regret that some are missing who, with better taste and skill than I have, would have fully partaken of my joy.

'I beg leave to remain, with much respect,

'My dear Sir,

'Yours faithfully,

'P. Brontë.

G. Smith, Esq., 65 Cornhill, London.'

'Please to give my kindest and most respectful regards to Mr. Williams, whom I have often heard of but never seen, and to Mr. Taylor, whom I had the pleasure of seeing when he ventured into this wild region.'

[1] Catherine Grace Frances Moody, Mrs. Gore (1799–1861), wrote about seventy books; *The Hamiltons, or the New Era*, published in 1834, being her sixteenth.

with one notable exception, viz. our old servant, who tenaciously maintains that it is not like—that it is too old-looking—but, as she, with equal tenacity, asserts that the Duke of Wellington's picture is a portrait of "the Master" (meaning papa), I am afraid not much weight is to be ascribed to her opinion; doubtless she confuses her recollections of me as I was in childhood with present impressions. Requesting always to be very kindly remembered to your mother and sisters, I am yours very thanklessly (according to desire), C. BRONTË.'

It may easily be conceived that two people living together as Mr. Brontë and his daughter did, almost entirely dependent on each other for society, and loving each other deeply (although not demonstratively)—that these two last members of a family would have their moments of keen anxiety respecting each other's health. There is not one letter of hers which I have read that does not contain some mention of her father's state in this respect. Either she thanks God with simple earnestness that he is well, or some infirmities of age beset him, and she mentions the fact, and then winces away from it, as from a sore that will not bear to be touched. He, in his turn, noted every indisposition of his one remaining child, exaggerated its nature, and sometimes worked himself up into a miserable state of anxiety, as in the case she refers to, when, her friend having named in a letter to him that his daughter was suffering from a bad cold, he could not rest till he despatched a messenger, to go, 'staff in hand,' a distance of fourteen miles, and see with his own eyes what was her real state, and return and report.

She evidently felt that this natural anxiety on the part of her father and friend increased the nervous depression of her own spirits whenever she was ill; and in the following letter she expresses her strong wish that the subject of her health should be as little alluded to as possible:[1]—

[1] There is a letter to Mr. George Smith, dated August 5:—

'My dear Sir,—You are rather formidable in your last note, and yet

'August 7.

'I am truly sorry that I allowed the words to which you refer to escape my lips, since their effect on you has been unpleasant; but try to chase every shadow of anxiety from

your menace has for me little terror. The charge is drawn from your two barrels by this fact: I do not thank you in ignorance, nor in puerile misconception, nor on hollow grounds. Do not fear that I suppose the benefit to be all on my side. Rest assured I regard these matters from a less unpractical point of view than you perhaps imagine. Though women are not taught the minutiæ and the mysteries of business, yet in the course of observation they manage to gather up some general idea of the leading principles on which it is conducted, and, if you reflect, it would betray a redundancy of vanity, as well as a lack of common sense, in any individual who should imagine that, in carrying out those principles, an exception has been made in her favour.

'Apart, however, from considerations of business there are others such as cannot indeed be entered in a ledger, nor calculated by rules of arithmetic, but of which, nevertheless, we all keep a record, and to which, according to our cast of mind, and also our cast of circumstances, we ascribe a greater or less value. The manner of doing a kind, or, if you will, merely a just action, the degree of pleasure that manner imparts, the amount of happiness derived from a given source—these things cannot indeed be handled, paid away and bartered for material possessions, as many can, but they colour our thoughts and leaven our feelings, just as the sunshine of a warm day or the impressions of delight left by fine scenery might do. We may owe as deep a debt for golden moments as can ever be incurred for golden coin.

'This will be read in Cornhill, and will not sound practical, but yet it *is* practical; I believe it to be a sober theory enough.

'I enclose a post-office order for 1*l.* 11*s.* 6*d.*, and beg to subscribe myself yours, &c. (is not this an unobjectionable form?), C. Brontë.

'P.S.—The peculating post-office clerk, evidently holding a publisher's principles respecting the value of poetry, has not paid Wordsworth's book the compliment of detaining it; it arrived safely and promptly.

'May I tell you how your mourning reveries respecting Glencoe and Loch Katrine will probably end? The thought has just come into my head and must be written down. Some day—you will be *even later than usual* in making your appearance at breakfast—your anxious mother, on going up to make enquiries, will find you deep in undeniable inspiration, on the point of completing the 12th canto of "The Highlands: a Grand Descriptive, Romantic, and Sentimental POEM, by George Smith, Esq."'

your mind, and, unless the restraint be very disagreeable to you, permit me to add an earnest request that you will broach the subject to me no more. It is the undisguised and most harassing anxiety of others that has fixed in my mind thoughts and expectations which must canker wherever they take root; against which every effort of religion or philosophy must at times totally fail; and subjugation to which is a cruel, terrible fate—the fate, indeed, of him whose life was passed under a sword suspended by a horsehair. I have had to entreat papa's consideration on this point. My nervous system is soon wrought on. I should wish to keep it in rational strength and coolness; but to do so I must determinedly resist the kindly meant but too irksome expression of an apprehension for the realisation or defeat of which I have no possible power to be responsible. At present I am pretty well. Thank God, papa, I trust, is no worse but he complains of weakness.'

CHAPTER XXI

Her father was always anxious to procure every change that was possible for her, seeing, as he did, the benefit which she derived from it, however reluctant she might have been to leave her home and him beforehand. This August she was invited to go for a week to the neighbourhood of Bowness, where Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth had taken a house; but she says, 'I consented to go, with reluctance, chiefly to please papa, whom a refusal on my part would much have annoyed; but I dislike to leave him. I trust he is not worse, but his complaint is still weakness. It is not right to anticipate evil, and to be always looking forward with an apprehensive spirit; but I think grief is a two-edged sword, it cuts both ways; the memory of one loss is the anticipation of another.'

It was during this visit at the Briery—Lady Kay-Shuttleworth having kindly invited me to meet her there—that I first made acquaintance with Miss Brontë.[1] If I copy out part of a letter which I wrote soon after this to a friend, who was deeply interested in her writings, I shall probably

[1] There are two or three earlier references to Mrs. Gaskell in Miss Brontë's correspondence. The first is in a letter to Mr. Smith Williams, dated November 20, 1849; the second in a letter to the same correspondent, dated November 29 in the same year (see Introduction, p. xxiv).

On January 1, 1850, Miss Brontë writes to Mr. Williams—

'May I beg that a copy of *Wuthering Heights* may be sent to Mrs. Gaskell? Her present address is 3 Sussex Place, Regent's Park. She has just sent me the *Moorland Cottage*. I felt disappointed about the publication of that book, having hoped it would be offered to Smith,

convey my first impressions more truly and freshly than by amplifying what I then said into a longer description.

'Dark when I got to Windermere station; a drive along the level road to Low-wood; then a stoppage at a pretty house, and then a pretty drawing-room, in which were Sir James and Lady Kay-Shuttleworth, and a little lady in a black silk gown, whom I could not see at first for the dazzle in the room; she came up and shook hands with me at once. I went up to unbonnet, &c.; came down to tea. The little lady worked away and hardly spoke, but I had time for a good look at her. She is (as she calls herself) *undeveloped*, thin, and more than half a head shorter than I am; soft brown hair, not very dark; eyes (very good and expressive, looking straight and open at you) of the same colour as her hair; a large mouth; the forehead square, broad, and rather overhanging. She has a very sweet voice; rather hesitates in choosing her expressions, but when chosen they seem without an effort admirable, and just befitting the occasion; there is nothing overstrained, but perfectly simple. . . . After breakfast we four went out on the lake, and Miss Brontë agreed with me in liking Mr. Newman's "Soul," and in liking "Modern Painters," and the idea of the "Seven Lamps;" and she told me about Father Newman's lectures at the Oratory in a very quiet, concise, graphic way. . . . She is more like Miss —— than any one in her ways—if you can fancy Miss —— to have gone through suffering enough to have taken out every spark of merriment, and to be shy and silent from the habit of extreme, intense solitude.

Elder, & Co.; but it seems she had no alternative, as it was Mr. Chapman himself who asked her to write a Christmas book.'

In a letter to her father, dated August 10, 1850, from the Briery, Windermere, Charlotte Brontë says—

'Sir James came to meet me at the station; both he and Lady Shuttleworth gave me a very kind reception. This place is exquisitely beautiful, though the weather is cloudy, misty, and stormy; but the sun bursts out occasionally and shows the hills and the lake. Mrs. Gaskell is coming here this evening, and one or two other people.'

Such a life as Miss Brontë's I have never heard of before. —— described her home to me as in a village of grey stone houses, perched up on the north side of a bleak moor, looking over sweeps of bleak moors, &c. &c.

'We were only three days together, the greater part of which was spent in driving about, in order to show Miss Brontë the Westmoreland scenery, as she had never been there before. We were both included in an invitation to drink tea quietly at Fox How; and then I saw how severely her nerves were taxed by the effort of going amongst strangers. We knew beforehand that the number of the party would not exceed twelve; but she suffered the whole day from an acute headache brought on by apprehension of the evening.

'Briery Close was situated high above Low-wood, and of course commanded an extensive view and wide horizon. I was struck by Miss Brontë's careful examination of the shape of the clouds and the signs of the heavens, in which she read, as from a book, what the coming weather would be. I told her that I saw she must have a view equal in extent at her own home. She said that I was right, but that the character of the prospect from Haworth was very different; that I had no idea what a companion the sky became to any one living in solitude—more than any inanimate object on earth—more than the moors themselves.'

The following extracts[1] convey some of her own impressions and feelings respecting this visit:—

'You said I should stay longer than a week in Westmoreland; you ought by this time to know me better. Is it my habit to keep dawdling at a place, long after the time I first fixed on for departing? I have got home, and I am thankful to say papa seems—to say the least—no worse than when I left him, yet I wish he were stronger. My visit passed off very well; I am very glad I went. The scenery

[1] From a letter to Ellen Nussey, dated Haworth, August 26, 1850.

is, of course, grand; could I have wandered about amongst those hills *alone*, I could have drunk in all their beauty; even in a carriage with company it was very well. Sir James was all the while as kind and friendly as he could be; he is in much better health.[1] . . . Miss Martineau was from home; she always leaves her house at Ambleside during the Lake season, to avoid the influx of visitors to which she would otherwise be subject.

'If I could only have dropped unseen out of the carriage, and gone away by myself in amongst those grand hills and sweet dales, I should have drunk in the full power of this glorious scenery. In company this can hardly be. Sometimes, while Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth was warning me against the faults of the artist class, all the while vagrant artist instincts were busy in the mind of his listener.

'I forgot to tell you that, about a week before I went to Westmoreland, there came an invitation to Harden Grange' (Mr. Busfield Ferrand's place [2]), 'which, of course, I declined. Two or three days after a large party made their appearance here, consisting of Mrs. F(errand) and sundry other ladies and two gentlemen; one tall and stately, black-haired and whiskered, who turned out to be Lord John Manners; the other not so distinguished-looking, shy, and a little queer, who was Mr. Smythe, the son of Lord Strangford. I found Mrs. F(errand) a true lady in manners and appearance' (she is the sister or daughter, I forget which, of Lord Blantyre), 'very gentle and unassuming. Lord John Manners brought

[1] The following passage is in the original letter: 'Lady Shuttleworth never got out, being confined to the house with a cold; but fortunately there was Mrs. Gaskell, the authoress of *Mary Barton*, who came to the Briery the day after me. I was truly glad of her companionship. She is a woman of the most genuine talent, of cheerful, pleasing, and cordial manners, and, I believe, of a kind and good heart.'

[2] Mr. Ferrand was a considerable landowner, whose 'place,' Harden Grange, is four miles from Haworth. He died in 1889. His wife was the second daughter of the eleventh Lord Blantyre. Mrs. Ferrand died in 1896.

in his hand a brace of grouse for papa, which was a well-timed present: a day or two before papa had been wishing for some.'

To these extracts I must add one other from a letter referring to this time. It is addressed to Miss Wooler, the kind friend of both her girlhood and womanhood, who had invited her to spend a fortnight with her at her cottage lodgings.

'Haworth: September 27, 1850.

'When I tell you that I have already been to the Lakes this season, and that it is scarcely more than a month since I returned, you will understand that it is no longer within my option to accept your kind invitation. I wish I could have gone to you. I have already had my excursion, and there is an end to it. Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth is residing near Windermere, at a house called the "Briery," and it was there I was staying for a little time this August. He very kindly showed me the neighbourhood, *as it can be seen from a carriage*, and I discerned that the Lake country is a glorious region, of which I had only seen the similitude in dreams, waking or sleeping. Decidedly I find it does not agree with me to prosecute the search of the picturesque in a carriage. A wagon, a spring-cart, even a post-chaise might do; but the carriage upsets everything. I longed to slip out unseen, and to run away by myself in amongst the hills and dales. Erratic and vagrant instincts tormented me, and these I was obliged to control, or rather suppress, for fear of growing in any degree enthusiastic, and thus drawing attention to the "lioness"—the authoress.

'You say that you suspect I have formed a large circle of acquaintance by this time. No: I cannot say that I have. I doubt whether I possess either the wish or the power to do so. A few friends I should like to have, and those few I should like to know well; if such knowledge brought proportionate regard, I could not help concentrating my feelings; dissipation, I think, appears synonymous with dilution. However I have, as yet, scarcely been tried.

During the month I spent in London in the spring I kept very quiet, having the fear of lionising before my eyes. I only went out once to dinner, and once was present at an evening party; and the only visits I have paid have been to Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth's and my publisher's. From this system I should not like to depart; as far as I can see, indiscriminate visiting tends only to a waste of time and a vulgarising of character. Besides, it would be wrong to leave papa often; he is now in his seventy-fifth year; the infirmities of age begin to creep upon him; during the summer he has been much harassed by chronic bronchitis, but I am thankful to say that he is now somewhat better. I think my own health has derived benefit from change to exercise.

'Somebody in Dewsbury professes to have authority for saying that "when Miss Brontë was in London she neglected to attend Divine service on the Sabbath, and in the week spent her time in going about to balls, theatres, and operas." On the other hand, the London quidnuncs make my seclusion a matter of wonder, and devise twenty romantic fictions to account for it. Formerly I used to listen to report with interest, and a certain credulity, but I am now grown deaf and sceptical: experience has taught me how absolutely devoid of foundation her stories may be.'

I must now quote from the first letter I had the privilege of receiving from Miss Brontë. It is dated August 27.

'Papa and I have just had tea; he is sitting quietly in his room, and I in mine; "storms of rain" are sweeping over the garden and churchyard: as to the moors, they are hidden in thick fog. Though alone I am not unhappy; I have a thousand things to be thankful for, and, amongst the rest, that this morning I received a letter from you, and that this evening I have the privilege of answering it.

'I do not know the "Life of Sydney Taylor;"[1] whenever

[1] *Selections from the Writings of J. Sydney Taylor, with a Brief Sketch of his Life.* London, 1843. John Sydney Taylor (1795–1841) was a London journalist of Irish origin.

I have the opportunity I will get it. The little French book you mention shall also take its place on the list of books to be procured as soon as possible. It treats a subject interesting to all women—perhaps more especially to single women, though, indeed, mothers, like you, study it for the sake of their daughters. The "Westminster Review" is not a periodical I see regularly, but some time since I got hold of a number—for last January, I think—in which there was an article entitled "Woman's Mission" (the phrase is hackneyed), containing a great deal that seemed to me just and sensible. Men begin to regard the position of woman in another light than they used to do; and a few men, whose sympathies are fine and whose sense of justice is strong, think and speak of it with a candour that commands my admiration. They say, however—and, to an extent, truly—that the amelioration of our condition depends on ourselves. Certainly there are evils which our own efforts will best reach; but as certainly there are other evils—deep-rooted in the foundations of the social system—which no efforts of ours can touch; of which we cannot complain; of which it is advisable not too often to think.

'I have read Tennyson's "In Memoriam,"[1] or rather part of it; I closed the book when I had got about halfway. It is beautiful; it is mournful; it is monotonous. Many of the feelings expressed bear, in their utterance, the stamp of truth; yet, if Arthur Hallam had been somewhat nearer Alfred Tennyson—his brother instead of his friend—I should have distrusted this rhymed, and measured, and printed monument of grief. What change the lapse of years may work I do not know; but it seems to me that bitter sorrow, while recent, does not flow out in verse.

'I promised to send you Wordsworth's "Prelude,"[2] and, accordingly, despatch it by this post; the other little volume

[1] Tennyson's *In Memoriam* was published in 1850.

[2] *The Prelude; or, Growth of a Poet's Mind: an Autobiographical Poem*, by William Wordsworth, was published, after his death in 1850, by Edward Moxon, Dover Street, London.

shall follow in a day or two. I shall be glad to hear from you whenever you have time to write to me, *but you are never on any account to do this except when inclination prompts and leisure permits.* I should never thank you for a letter which you had felt it a task to write.'

A short time after we had met at the Briery she sent me the volume of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell's poems, and thus alludes to them in the note that accompanied the parcel :—

'The little book of rhymes was sent by way of fulfilling a rashly made promise; and the promise was made to prevent you from throwing away four shillings in an injudicious purchase. I do not like my own share of the work, nor care that it should be read : Ellis Bell's I think good and vigorous, and Acton's have the merit of truth and simplicity. Mine are chiefly juvenile productions, the restless effervescence of a mind that would not be still. In those days the sea too often "wrought and was tempestuous," and weed, sand, shingle—all turned up in the tumult. This image is much too magniloquent for the subject, but you will pardon it.'

Another letter of some interest was addressed, about this time, to a literary friend,[1] on September 5.

'The reappearance of the "Athenæum" is very acceptable, not merely for its own sake—though I esteem the opportunity of its perusal a privilege—but because, as a weekly token of the remembrance of friends, it cheers and gives pleasure. I only fear that its regular transmission may become a task to you; in this case, discontinue it at once.

'I did indeed enjoy my trip to Scotland, and yet I saw little of the face of the country; nothing of its grander or finer scenic features; but Edinburgh, Melrose, Abbotsford—these three in themselves sufficed to stir feelings of such deep interest and admiration that neither at the time did I regret, nor have I since regretted, the want of wider space over

[1] Mr. James Taylor.

which to diffuse the sense of enjoyment. There was room and variety enough to be very happy, and "enough," the proverb says, "is as good as a feast." The Queen, indeed, was right to climb Arthur's Seat with her husband and children. I shall not soon forget how I felt when, having reached its summit, we all sat down and looked over the city, towards the sea and Leith, and the Pentland Hills. No doubt you are proud of being a native of Scotland—proud of your country, her capital, her children, and her literature. You cannot be blamed.

'The article in the "Palladium"[1] is one of those notices over which an author rejoices trembling. He rejoices to find his work finely, fully, fervently appreciated, and trembles under the responsibility such appreciation seems to devolve upon him. I am counselled to wait and watch—D.V. I will do so; yet it is harder to wait with the hands bound, and the observant and reflective faculties at their silent and unseen work, than to labour mechanically.

'I need not say how I felt the remarks on "Wuthering Heights;" they woke the saddest yet most grateful feelings; they are true, they are discriminating, they are full of late justice, but it is very late—alas! in one sense, *too* late. Of this, however, and of the pang of regret for a light prematurely extinguished, it is not wise to speak much. Whoever the author of this article may be, I remain his debtor.

[1] This article was by Sydney Thompson Dobell (1824–1874), poet and critic, whose review of Currer Bell was afterwards republished in his *Life and Letters*, vol. i. pp. 163–86 (1878). The article contains a brilliant appreciation of *Wuthering Heights*. In a letter to Dr. Samuel Brown. Sydney Dobell writes, 'Of larger calibre and metal more "tried in the fire" is Currer Bell. You would have been charmed with a letter of hers which her friend Miss Martineau sent me the other day. A noble letter, simple and strong; but tender all over with amenities that showed like ripples on a wave. I was amused with her playful suspicion that "if Mr. Dobell could see her, sometimes darning a stocking, or making a pie in the kitchen of an old parsonage in the obscurest of Yorkshire villages, he might recall his sentence."—A fig for Mr. D.'s discernment, if he did not confirm it—with costs.'

'Yet you see, even here, "Shirley" is disparaged in comparison with "Jane Eyre;" and yet I took great pains with "Shirley." I did not hurry; I tried to do my best, and my own impression was that it was not inferior to the former work; indeed, I had bestowed on it more time, thought, and anxiety: but great part of it was written under the shadow of impending calamity; and the last volume, I cannot deny, was composed in the eager, restless endeavour to combat mental sufferings that were scarcely tolerable.

'You sent the tragedy of "Galileo Galilei," by Samuel Brown,[1] in one of the Cornhill parcels; it contained, I remember, passages of very great beauty. Whenever you send any more books (but that must not be till I return what I now have) I should be glad if you would include amongst them the "Life of Dr. Arnold." Do you know also the "Life of Sydney Taylor"? I am not familiar even with the name, but it has been recommended to me as a work meriting perusal. Of course, when I name any book, it is always understood that it should be quite convenient to send it.[2]

[1] Samuel Brown (1817–1856) was a cousin of Dr. John Brown, author of *Rab and his Friends*. He was a chemist and wrote *Lectures on the Atomic Theory* and *Essays Scientific and Literary*. His tragedy *Galileo Galilei* was published in 1850.

[2] Miss Brontë wrote to Mr. George Smith on September 18, 1850—

'Feeling sure that any application of mine to Mr. Newby would merely result in some evasive reply, I have adopted your second suggestion and written the statement enclosed. I felt more than reluctant to give you any trouble about the matter, but your note presents the case in a manner which seems to do away with much of its intricacy and difficulty; in your hands, therefore, I leave it.

'If you *should* extract any money from Mr. Newby (of which I am not sanguine), I shall regard it in the light of a providential windfall and dispose of part of it—at least—accordingly; one half of whatever you may realise must be retained in your possession to add to any sum you may decide on giving Miss Kavanagh for her next work. This, however, is a presumptuous enumeration of chickens ere the eggs are hatched.

'Mr. Thackeray did very right to bring his Christmas book to you; I hope it will be a good one, better (that is, juster and more amiable)

than *Rebecca* and *Rowena*; if otherwise I can only wish that whenever he goes to the Elysian Fields (long may it be ere then!) he may be immediately caught by his own Rowena (not Sir Walter Scott's) and compelled by her into a conjugal union. That would be "*poetical justice*," I think.

'Mr. Ruskin's fairy tale* will no doubt offer a delicate contrast to the Christmas book—something like a flower and a branch of oak. Mrs. Gaskell, it seems, has likewise written a Christmas book. I wonder by whom it is to be published; I half expected from some things that were said when I saw her that you would have had the first offer of her next work.

'You should be very thankful that books cannot "talk to each other as well as to their reader." Conceive the state of your warehouse if such were the case. The confusion of tongues at Babel, or a congregation of Irvingites in full exercise of their miraculous gift, would offer but a feeble type of it. Terrible, too, would be the quarrelling. Yourself and Mr. Taylor and Mr. Williams would all have to go in several times in the day to part or silence the disputants. Dr. Knox alone, with his *Race: a Fragment* (a book which I read with combined interest, amusement, and edification), would deliver the voice of a Stentor if any other book ventured to call in question his favourite dogmas.

'Still I like the notion of a mystic whispering amongst the lettered leaves, and perhaps at night, when London is asleep and Cornhill desert, when all your clerks and men are away, and the warehouse is shut up, such a whispering may be heard—by those who have ears to hear.

'I find, on referring again to Mr. Newby's letter to my sister, he says that the sale of 250 copies of *Wuthering Heights* would "leave a *surplus* of 100*l.* to be divided."'

And a little later she wrote—

'*Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* were published by Mr. Newby on the condition that my sister should share the risk. Accordingly they advanced 50*l.*, Mr. Newby engaging to repay it as soon as the work should have sold a sufficient number of copies to defray expenses; and Mr. Newby mentions in his letter to my sister on the subject that "the sale of 250 copies would leave a *surplus* of 100*l.* to be divided." No portion of the sum advanced has yet been returned, and, as it appears that the work is now entirely out of print, I should feel greatly obliged if you would call upon Mr. Newby and enquire whether it be convenient to him to refund the amount received.

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* *The King of the Golden River*. By John Ruskin. Smith, Elder & Co., 1851.

'For *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* my sister Anne was to receive 25*l.* on the day of publication, a second 25*l.* on the sale reaching 250 copies, 50*l.* more on its extending to 400 copies, and another 50*l.* on 500 being sold.

'Two instalments of 25*l.* each were paid to my sister. I should be glad if you could learn how many copies of the work have been sold on the whole, and whether any further sum is now due.'

CHAPTER XXII

It was thought desirable about this time to republish 'Wuthering Heights' and 'Agnes Grey,' the works of the two sisters, and Charlotte undertook the task of editing them.

She wrote to Mr. Williams, September 29, 1850, 'It is my intention to write a few lines of remark on "Wuthering Heights," which, however, I propose to place apart as a brief preface before the tale. I am likewise compelling myself to read it over, for the first time of opening the book since my sister's death. Its power fills me with renewed admiration; but yet I am oppressed: the reader is scarcely ever permitted a taste of unalloyed pleasure; every beam of sunshine is poured down through black bars of threatening cloud; every page is surcharged with a sort of moral electricity; and the writer was unconscious of all this—nothing could make her conscious of it.

'And this makes me reflect; perhaps I am too incapable of perceiving the faults and peculiarities of my own style.

'I should wish to revise the proofs, if it be not too great an inconvenience to send them. It seems to me advisable to modify the orthography of the old servant Joseph's speeches; for though as it stands it exactly renders the Yorkshire dialect to a Yorkshire ear, yet I am sure Southerns must find it unintelligible; and thus one of the most graphic characters in the book is lost on them.

'I grieve to say that I possess no portrait of either of my sisters.'

To her own dear friend,[1] as to one who had known and

[1] To Ellen Nussey. The letter is dated October 3, 1850.

loved her sisters, she writes still more fully respecting the painfulness of her task.

'There is nothing wrong, and I am writing you a line as you desire, merely to say that I *am* busy just now. Mr. Smith wishes to reprint some of Emily's and Anne's works, with a few little additions from the papers they have left; and I have been closely engaged in revising, transcribing, preparing a preface, notice, &c. As the time for doing this is limited, I am obliged to be industrious. I found the task at first exquisitely painful and depressing; but regarding it in the light of a *sacred duty*, I went on, and now can bear it better. It is work, however, that I cannot do in the evening, for if I did I should have no sleep at night. Papa, I am thankful to say, is in improved health, and so, I think, am I; I trust you are the same.

'I have just received a kind letter from Miss Martineau. She has got back to Ambleside, and had heard of my visit to the Lakes. She expressed her regret, &c., at not being at home.

'I am both angry and surprised at myself for not being in better spirits; for not growing accustomed, or at least resigned, to the solitude and isolation of my lot. But my late occupation left a result for some days, and indeed still, very painful. The reading over of papers, the renewal of remembrances, brought back the pang of bereavement, and occasioned a depression of spirits wellnigh intolerable. For one or two nights I scarcely knew how to get on till morning; and when morning came I was still haunted with a sense of sickening distress. I tell you these things because it is absolutely necessary to me to have some relief. You will forgive me, and not trouble yourself, or imagine that I am one whit worse than I say. It is quite a mental ailment, and I believe and hope is better now. I think so, because I can speak about it, which I never can when grief is at its worst.

'I thought to find occupation and interest in writing,

when alone at home, but hitherto my efforts have been vain; the deficiency of every stimulus is so complete. You will recommend me, I dare say, to go from home; but that does no good, even could I again leave papa with an easy mind (thank God! he is better). I cannot describe what a time of it I had after my return from London, Scotland, &c. There was a reaction that sank me to the earth; the deadly silence, solitude, desolation, were awful; the craving for companionship, the hopelessness of relief, were what I should dread to feel again.

'Dear Nell, when I think of you it is with a compassion and tenderness that scarcely cheer me. Mentally, I fear, you also are too lonely and too little occupied. It seems our doom, for the present at least. May God in His mercy help us to bear it!'

During her last visit to London, as mentioned in one of her letters, she had made the acquaintance of her correspondent Mr. Lewes. That gentleman says—

'Some months after' (the appearance of the review of 'Shirley' in the 'Edinburgh') 'Currer Bell came to London, and I was invited to meet her at your house. You may remember she asked you not to point me out to her, but allow her to discover me if she could. She *did* recognise me almost as soon as I came into the room. You tried me in the same way; I was less sagacious. However I sat by her side a great part of the evening, and was greatly interested by her conversation. On parting we shook hands, and she said, "We are friends now, are we not?" "Were we not always, then?" I asked. "No! not always," she said, significantly; and that was the only allusion she made to the offending article. I lent her some of Balzac's and George Sand's novels to take with her into the country; and the following letter was written when they were returned:—

'"I am sure you will have thought me very dilatory in returning the books you so kindly lent me; the fact is, having

some other books to send, I retained yours to enclose them in the same parcel.

'"Accept my thanks for some hours of pleasant reading. Balzac was for me quite a new author; and in making his acquaintance, through the medium of 'Modeste Mignon' and 'Illusions Perdues,' you cannot doubt I have felt some interest. At first I thought he was going to be painfully minute, and fearfully tedious; one grew impatient of his long parade of detail, his slow revelation of unimportant circumstances, as he assembled his personages on the stage; but by-and-by I seemed to enter into the mystery of his craft, and to discover, with delight, where his force lay: is it not in the analysis of motive, and in a subtle perception of the most obscure and secret workings of the mind? Still, admire Balzac as we may, I think we do not like him; we rather feel towards him as towards an ungenial acquaintance who is for ever holding up in strong light our defects, and who rarely draws forth our better qualities.

'"Truly I like George Sand better.

'"Fantastic, fanatical, unpractical enthusiast as she often is—far from truthful as are many of her views of life—misled, as she is apt to be, by her feelings—George Sand has a better nature than M. de Balzac; her brain is larger, her heart warmer than his. The 'Lettres d'un Voyageur' are full of the writer's self; and I never felt so strongly, as in the perusal of this work, that most of her very faults spring from the excess of her good qualities: it is this excess which has often hurried her into difficulty, which has prepared for her enduring regret.

'"But I believe her mind is of that order which disastrous experience teaches, without weakening, or too much disheartening, and, in that case, the longer she lives the better she will grow. A hopeful point in all her writings is the scarcity of false French sentiment; I wish I could say its absence; but the weed flourishes here and there even in the 'Lettres.'"'

I remember the good expression of disgust which Miss

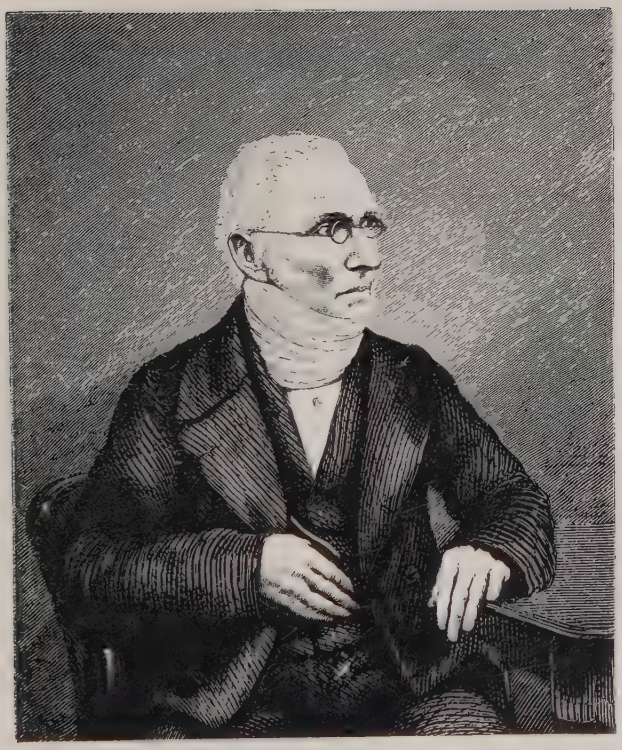
Brontë made use of in speaking to me of some of Balzac's novels: 'They leave such a bad taste in my mouth.'

The reader will notice that most of the letters from which I now quote are devoted to critical and literary subjects. These were, indeed, her principal interests at this time; the revision of her sisters' works, and writing a short memoir of them, was the painful employment of every day during the dreary autumn of 1850. Wearied out by the vividness of her sorrowful recollections, she sought relief in long walks on the moors. A friend of hers, who wrote to me on the appearance of the eloquent article in the 'Daily News' upon the 'Death of Currer Bell,' gives an anecdote which may well come in here.

'They are mistaken in saying she was too weak to roam the hills for the benefit of the air. I do not think any one, certainly not any woman, in this locality, went so much on the moors as she did, when the weather permitted. Indeed, she was so much in the habit of doing so that people, who live quite away on the edge of the common, knew her perfectly well. I remember on one occasion an old woman saw her at a little distance, and she called out, "How! Miss Brontë! Hey yah (have you) seen ought o' my cofe (calf)?" Miss Brontë told her she could not say, for she did not know it. "Well!" she said, "yah know, it's getting up like nah (now), between a cah (cow) and a cofe—what we call a stirk, yah know, Miss Brontë; will yah turn it this way if yah happen to see't as yah're going back, Miss Brontë? Nah *do*, Miss Brontë."'

It must have been about this time that a visit was paid to her by some neighbours, who were introduced to her by a mutual friend. This visit has been described in a letter from which I am permitted to give extracts, which will show the impression made upon strangers by the character of the country round her home, and other circumstances. 'Though the weather was drizzly we resolved to make our long-

planned excursion to Haworth; so we packed ourselves into the buffalo skin, and that into the gig, and set off about eleven. The rain ceased, and the day was just suited to the scenery—wild and chill—with great masses of cloud glooming over the moors, and here and there a ray of sunshine covertly stealing through, and resting with a dim magical light upon some high bleak village; or darting down into some deep glen, lighting up the tall chimney, or glistening on the windows and wet roof of the mill which lies couching in the bottom. The country got wilder and wilder as we approached Haworth; for the last four miles we were ascending a huge moor, at the very top of which lies the dreary, black-looking village of Haworth. The village street itself is one of the steepest hills I have ever seen, and the stones are so horribly jolting that I should have got out and walked with W——, if possible, but, having once begun the ascent, to stop was out of the question. At the top was the inn where we put up, close by the church; and the clergyman's house, we were told, was at the top of the churchyard. So through that we went—a dreary, dreary place, literally *paved* with rain-blackened tombstones, and all on the slope; for at Haworth there is on the highest height a higher still, and Mr. Brontë's house stands considerably above the church. There was the house before us, a small oblong stone house, with not a tree to screen it from the cutting wind; but how we were to get at it from the churchyard we could not see! There was an old man in the churchyard, brooding like a ghoul over the graves, with a sort of grim hilarity on his face. I thought he looked hardly human; however he was human enough to tell us the way, and presently we found ourselves in the little bare parlour. Presently the door opened, and in came a superannuated mastiff, followed by an old gentleman very like Miss Brontë, who shook hands with us, and then went to call his daughter. A long interval, during which we coaxed the old dog, and looked at a picture of Miss Brontë, by Richmond, the solitary ornament of the room, looking strangely out of place on the bare walls, and



REV. PATRICK BRONTË.
From a Photograph.

at the books on the little shelves, most of them evidently the gift of the authors since Miss Brontë's celebrity. Presently she came in, and welcomed us very kindly, and took me upstairs to take off my bonnet, and herself brought me water and towels. The uncarpeted stone stairs and floors, the old drawers propped on wood, were all scrupulously clean and neat. When we went into the parlour again we began talking very comfortably, when the door opened and Mr. Brontë looked in; seeing his daughter there, I suppose he thought it was all right, and he retreated to his study on the opposite side of the passage, presently emerging again to bring W—— a country newspaper. This was his last appearance till we went. Miss Brontë spoke with the greatest warmth of Miss Martineau, and of the good she had gained from her. Well! we talked about various things—the character of the people, about her solitude, &c.—till she left the room to help about dinner, I suppose, for she did not return for an age. The old dog had vanished; a fat curly-haired dog honoured us with his company for some time, but finally manifested a wish to get out, so we were left alone. At last she returned, followed by the maid and dinner, which made us all more comfortable; and we had some very pleasant conversation, in the midst of which time passed quicker than we supposed, for at last W—— found that it was half-past three, and we had fourteen or fifteen miles before us. So we hurried off, having obtained from her a promise to pay us a visit in the spring; and the old gentleman having issued once more from his study to say good-bye, we returned to the inn, and made the best of our way homewards.

'Miss Brontë put me so in mind of her own "Jane Eyre." She looked smaller than ever, and moved about so quietly, and noiselessly, just like a little bird, as Rochester called her, barring that all birds are joyous, and that joy can never have entered that house since it was first built; and yet, perhaps, when that old man married, and took home his bride, and children's voices and feet were heard about the house, even that desolate crowded graveyard and biting

blast could not quench cheerfulness and hope. Now there is something touching in the sight of that little creature entombed in such a place, and moving about herself like a spirit, especially when you think that the slight still frame encloses a force of strong fiery life, which nothing has been able to freeze or extinguish.'

In one of the preceding letters Miss Brontë referred to an article in the 'Palladium' which had rendered what she considered the due meed of merit to 'Wuthering Heights,' her sister Emily's tale. Her own works were praised, and praised with discrimination, and she was grateful for this. But her warm heart was filled to the brim with kindly feelings towards him who had done justice to the dead. She anxiously sought out the name of the writer; and having discovered that it was Mr. Sydney Dobell, he immediately became one of her

Peculiar people whom Death had made dear.

She looked with interest upon everything he wrote; and before long we shall find that they corresponded.

TO W. S. WILLIAMS, ESQ.

'October 25.

'The box of books came last night, and, as usual, I have only gratefully to admire the selection made: Jeffrey's "Essays," "Dr. Arnold's Life," "The Roman," "Alton Locke," [1] these were all wished for and welcome.

'You say I keep no books; pardon me—I am ashamed of my own rapaciousness: I have kept Macaulay's "History," and Wordsworth's "Prelude," and Taylor's "Philip Van Artevelde." I soothe my conscience by saying that the two last—being poetry—do not count. This is a convenient doctrine for me: I meditate acting upon it with reference to "The Roman," so I trust nobody in Cornhill will dispute its

[1] Jeffrey's *Essays* appeared in one volume in 1844; Dr. Arnold's *Life*, by Dean Stanley, in 1845; *The Roman*, by Sydney Dobell, in 1850; and *Alton Locke*, by Charles Kingsley, in 1850.

validity or affirm that "poetry" has a value, except for trunk-makers.

'I have already had Macaulay's "Essays," Sidney Smith's "Lectures on Moral Philosophy," and Knox on "Race." Pickering's work on the same subject I have not seen; nor all the volumes of Leigh Hunt's "Autobiography." However I am now abundantly supplied for a long time to come. I liked Hazlitt's "Essays" much.[1]

'The autumn, as you say, has been very fine. I and solitude and memory have often profited by its sunshine on the moors.

'I had felt some disappointment at the non-arrival of the proof sheets of "Wuthering Heights;" a feverish impatience to complete the revision is apt to beset me. The work of looking over papers, &c., could not be gone through with impunity and with unaltered spirits; associations too tender, regrets too bitter, sprang out of it. Meantime the Cornhill books now, as heretofore, are my best medicine, affording a solace which could not be yielded by the very same books procured from a common library.

'Already I have read the greatest part of "The Roman;" passages in it possess a kindling virtue such as true poetry alone can boast; there are images of genuine grandeur; there are lines that at once stamp themselves on the memory. Can it be true that a new planet has risen on the heaven, whence all stars seemed fast fading? I believe it is; for this Sydney or Dobell speaks with a voice of his own, unborrowed, unmimicked. You hear Tennyson, indeed, sometimes, and Byron sometimes, in some passages of "The

[1] Macaulay's *Essays* first appeared in 1843; Sydney Smith's *Lectures* delivered in 1804–6 were published in 1850 under the title of *Elementary Sketches of Moral Philosophy*. *The Races of Men: a Fragment*, by Dr. Robert Knox (1791–1862), entomologist and anatomist, first appeared in 1850. *The Races of Man*, by C. Pickering, was published in 1850, as was also the first edition of Leigh Hunt's *Autobiography*. The edition of Hazlitt would be the reprint in 1845–6 of *Table Talk, or Original Essays on Men and Manners*, which first appeared in 1821–2.

Roman;" but then again you have a new note, nowhere clearer than in a certain brief lyric, sung in a meeting of minstrels, a sort of dirge over a dead brother; *that* not only charmed the ear and brain, it soothed the heart.'[1]

[1] She wrote the following letter to Mr. George Smith on October 31, 1850:—

'My dear Sir,—It is pleasing to find that already a species of preparation is commencing in your mind, and, I doubt not, in the minds of others in Cornhill, &c., towards a due reception of that "Coming Man" the great Cardinal Archbishop Wiseman. After his arrival London will not be what it was, nor will this day and generation be either *what* or *where* they were. A new Joshua—a greater even than Joshua—will command the sun—not merely to stand still, but to go back six centuries.

'I could have fancied something—if not in your letter yet in the clever scribe it enclosed—savouring of the *Middle Ages*. Yielding to the impulse of fancy, I cannot help anticipating the time when 65 Cornhill shall be honoured by the daily domiciliary visit of "a friar of orders grey," and when that small back room (I do not know what its present mundane use and denomination may be), lit by a skylight, shall be fitted up as an oratory, with a saint in a niche, two candles always burning, a *prie-dieu*, and a handsomely bound Missal; also a confessional chair—very comfortable—for the priest, and a square of carpet, or better the bare boards, for the penitent.

'Here, every morning, when you, Mr. Taylor, and Mr. Williams come in to business, you will, instead of at once repairing to your desks in heathenish sort, enter, tell your beads (each of you will wear a goodly rosary and crucifix), sign yourselves with holy water (of which there will always be a small vase properly replenished), and—once a month at least—you will duly make confession and receive absolution. The ease this will give to your now never-disburthened heretic consciences words can but feebly express.

'So gratifying is this picture that I feel reluctant to look on any other; Imagination, however, obstinately persists in showing the reverse. What if your organ of Firmness should withstand "Holy Obedience"? What if your causative and investigatory faculties should question the infallibility of Rome? What if that presumptuous self-reliance, that audacious championship of Reason and Common Sense which ought to have been crushed out of you all in your cradles, or at least during your school days, and which, perhaps, on the contrary, were encouraged and developed, what if these things should induce you madly to oppose the returning supremacy and advancing victory of the Holy Catholic Church?

'The answer is afflicting, but must be given; indeed, you give it

The following extract will be read with interest as conveying her thoughts after the perusal of Dr. Arnold's 'Life:'—

November 6.

'I have just finished reading the "Life of Dr. Arnold;" but now, when I wish, according to your request, to express what yourself when you allude to "the preparations in Smithfield." The chances are that some First Sunday in Advent (1880) you find yourselves duly robed in the yellow "San Benito," walking in the procession of as fine an "auto da fe" as ever made Christendom exult.

'The two post-office orders came safely. I showed papa the *Paper Lantern*;[1] he was greatly amused with it, and would like to see the whole when it is completed to show the curates, whose case it will fit with much nicety.

'What you say about the present dulness and dreariness of London, and the sort of longing for fresh air and freedom your words rather imply than express, contain for me the germs of a wholesome sermon—a sermon which I shall often preach to myself on these long autumn evenings and longer winter evenings that approach. To quote an old Puritan tract, "there is a crook in every lot."

'Be sure not to give yourself much trouble about Mr. Newby; I have not the least expectation that you will be able to get anything from him; he has an evasive, shuffling plan of meeting, or rather eluding, such demands, against which it is fatiguing to contend. If you think payment would be really inconvenient, do not urge it. I must now, however, dissuade you from calling on him. As to that information which is to earn "a statue in Paternoster Row," I hope Mr. Wyatt will have nothing to do with the said statue, and also that it will not be equestrian. As to the costume, doubtless felicitous ideas will be suggested on that head by the novelties which, report says, are likely to be introduced at the Great Exhibition.

'Forgive all the nonsense of this letter, there is such a pleasure and relief either in writing or talking a little nonsense sometimes to anybody who is sensible enough to understand and good-natured enough to pardon it.

'Believe me

'Yours sincerely,

'George Smith, Esq.' 'C. Brontë.

[1] *A Paper Lantern for Puseyites*, by 'Will o' the Wisp,' a satire in verse, was first published by Smith, Elder & Co. in 1843; a new and revised edition of the pamphlet being issued by the same firm in 1850.

I think of it, I do not find the task very easy; proper terms seem wanting. This is not a character to be dismissed with a few laudatory words; it is not a one-sided character; pure panegyric would be inappropriate. Dr. Arnold (it seems to me) was not quite saintly; his greatness was cast in a mortal mould; he was a little severe, almost a little hard; he was vehement and somewhat oppugnant. Himself the most indefatigable of workers, I know not whether he could have understood, or made allowance for, a temperament that required more rest; yet not to one man in twenty thousand is given his giant faculty of labour; by virtue of it he seems to me the greatest of working men. Exacting he might have been, then, on this point; and granting that he were so, and a little hasty, stern, and positive, those were his sole faults (if, indeed, that can be called a fault which in no shape degrades the individual's own character, but is only apt to oppress and overstrain the weaker nature of his neighbours). Afterwards come his good qualities. About these there is nothing dubious. Where can we find justice, firmness, independence, earnestness, sincerity, fuller and purer than in him?

'But this is not all, and I am glad of it. Besides high intellect and stainless rectitude his letters and his life attest his possession of the most true-hearted affection. *Without* this, however one might admire, one could not love him; but *with* it I think we love him much. A hundred such men—fifty—nay, ten, or five, such righteous men might save any country; might victoriously champion any cause.

'I was struck, too, by the almost unbroken happiness of his life; a happiness resulting chiefly, no doubt, from the right use to which he put that health and strength which God had given him, but also owing partly to a singular exemption from those deep and bitter griefs which most human beings are called on to endure. His wife was what he wished; his children were healthy and promising; his own health was excellent; his undertakings were crowned

with success; even death was kind, for however sharp the pains of his last hour they were but brief. God's blessing seems to have accompanied him from the cradle to the grave. One feels thankful to know that it has been permitted to any man to live such a life.

'When I was in Westmoreland last August I spent an evening at Fox How, where Mrs. Arnold and her daughters still reside. It was twilight as I drove to the place, and almost dark ere I reached it; still I could perceive that the situation was lovely. The house looked like a nest half buried in flowers and creepers; and, dusk as it was, I could *feel* that the valley and the hills round were beautiful as imagination could dream.' [1]

[1] A letter to Mr. George Smith is dated December 3, 1850:—

'Your Will o' the Wisp is a very pleasant and witty sprite, and though not venomous his pungency may be none the less effective on that account. Indeed, I believe a good-natured kind of ridicule is a weapon more appropriate to the present crisis than bitter satire or serious indignation. We are in no danger. Why should we be angry? I only wish the author had rectified some of her rhymes (such as sedilia and famil*iar*, tiara and bear*er*), but critics will surely not be severe with the little book.

'Mr. M. A. Titmarsh holds out an alluring invitation to the Rhine. I hope thousands will take advantage of the facilities he offers to make the excursion in the "polite society" of the Kickleburys.

'As to Mr. Newby, he charms me. First there is the fascinating coyness with which he shuns your pursuit. For a month, or nearly two months, have you been fondly hoping to win from him an interview, while he has been making himself scarce as violets at Christmas, aristocratically absenting himself from town, evading your grasp like a publisher metamorphosed into a rainbow. Then, when you come upon him in that fatal way in Regent Street, pin him down, and hunt him home with more promptitude than politeness, and with a want of delicate consideration for your victim's fine feelings calculated to awaken emotions of regret, that victim is still ready for the emergency. Scorning to stand on the defensive, he at once assumes the offensive. Not only has he realised no profit, he has sustained actual loss; and, to account for this, adds, with a sublime boldness of invention, that the author "wished him to spend all possible profits in advertisements."

If I say again what I have said already before, it is only to impress and re-impress upon my readers the dreary monotony of her life at this time. The dark, bleak season of the year brought back the long evenings, which tried her severely, all the more so because her weak eyesight rendered her incapable of following any occupation but knitting by candle-light. For her father's sake, as well as for her own, she found it necessary to make some exertion to ward off settled depression of spirits. She accordingly accepted an invitation to spend a week or ten days with Miss Martineau at Ambleside. She also proposed to come to Manchester and see me, on her way to Westmoreland. But, unfortunately, I was from home, and not able therefore to receive her. The friends with whom I was staying in the South of England (hearing me express my regret that I could not accept her friendly proposal, and aware of the sad state of health and spirits which made some change necessary for her) wrote to desire that she would come and spend a week or two with me at their house. She acknowledged this invitation in a letter to me, dated

'Equally well acted too is the artless simplicity of his surprise at the news you communicate; and his pretty little menace of a "Chancery injunction" consummates the picture and makes it perfect.

'Any statement of accounts he may send I shall at once transmit to you. In your hands I leave him; deal with him as you list, but I heartily wish you well rid of the business.

'On referring to Mr. Newby's letters I find in one of them a boast that he is "advertising vigorously." I remember that this flourish caused us to look out carefully for the results of his vast exertions; but though we everywhere encountered *Jane Eyre* it was as rare a thing to find an advertisement of *Wuthering Heights* as it appears to be to meet with Mr. Newby in town at an unfashionable season of the year. The fact is he advertised the book very scantily and for a very short time. Of course we never expressed a wish or uttered an injunction on the subject; nor was it likely we should, as it was rather important to us to recover the 50*l.* we had advanced; more we did not ask.

'I would say something about regret for the trouble you have had in your chase of this etherial and evanescent ornament of "*the* Trade," but I fear apologies would be even worse than thanks. Both these shall be left out.'

'December 13, 1850.

'My dear Mrs. Gaskell,—Miss ——'s kindness and yours is such that I am placed in the dilemma of not knowing how adequately to express my sense of it. *This* I know, however, very well—that if I *could* go and be with you for a week or two in such a quiet south-country house, and with such kind people as you describe, I should like it much. I find the proposal marvellously to my taste; it is the pleasantest, gentlest, sweetest temptation possible; but, delectable as it is, its solicitations are by no means to be yielded to without the sanction of reason, and therefore I desire for the present to be silent, and to stand back till I have been to Miss Martineau's, and returned home, and considered well whether it is a scheme as right as agreeable.

'Meantime the mere thought does me good.'

On December 10 the second edition of 'Wuthering Heights' was published. She sent a copy of it to Mr. Dobell, with the following letter:—

'Haworth, Keighley, near Yorkshire:
'December 8, 1850.

'I offer this little book to my critic in the "Palladium," and he must believe it accompanied by a tribute of the sincerest gratitude; not so much for anything he has said of myself as for the noble justice he has rendered to one dear to me as myself—perhaps dearer—and perhaps one kind word spoken for her awakens a deeper, tenderer sentiment of thankfulness than eulogies heaped on my own head. As you will see when you have read the biographical notice, my sister cannot thank you herself; she is gone out of your sphere and mine, and human blame and praise are nothing to her now. But to me, for her sake, they are something still; it revived me for many a day to find that, dead as she was, the work of her genius had at last met with worthy appreciation.

'Tell me, when you have read the introduction, whether any doubts still linger in your mind respecting the authorship of "Wuthering Heights," "Wildfell Hall," &c. Your mistrust did me some injustice; it proved a general conception of character such as I should be sorry to call mine; but these false ideas will naturally arise when we only judge an author from his works. In fairness I must also disclaim the flattering side of the portrait. I am no "young Penthesilea *mediis in millibus*," but a plain country parson's daughter.

'Once more I thank you, and that with a full heart.

'C. BRONTË.'

CHAPTER XXIII

Immediately after the republication of her sister's book she went to Miss Martineau's.

'I can write to you now, dear Ellen,[1] for I am away from home, and relieved, temporarily at least, by change of air and scene, from the heavy burden of depression which, I confess, has for nearly three months been sinking me to the earth. I shall never forget last autumn. Some days and nights have been cruel; but now, having once told you this, I need say no more on the subject. My loathing of solitude grew extreme, my recollection of my sisters intolerably poignant. I am better now. I am at Miss Martineau's for a week. Her house is very pleasant, both within and without; arranged at all points with admirable neatness and comfort. Her visitors enjoy the most perfect liberty; what she claims for herself she allows them. I rise at my own hour, breakfast alone (she is up at five, takes a cold bath, and a walk by starlight, and has finished breakfast and got to her work by seven o'clock). [I must insert a correction of this mistake as to Miss Martineau's hours, the fact being that Miss Martineau rose at six, and went to work at half-past eight, breakfasting separately from her visitor; as she says in a letter with which she has favoured me, "it was my practice to come and speak to C. B. when she sat down to breakfast, and *before* I went to work."] I pass the morning in the drawing-room—she, in her study. At two o'clock we meet—work, talk, and walk together till five, her dinner hour, spend the evening together, when she converses

[1] This letter to Ellen Nussey is dated December 18, 1850, from The Knoll, Ambleside.

fluently and abundantly, and with the most complete frankness. I go to my own room soon after ten; she sits up writing letters till twelve. She appears exhaustless in strength and spirits, and indefatigable in the faculty of labour. She is a great and good woman; of course not without peculiarities, but I have seen none as yet that annoy me. She is both hard and warm hearted, abrupt and affectionate, liberal and despotic. I believe she is not at all conscious of her own absolutism. When I tell her of it she denies the charge warmly; then I laugh at her. I believe she almost rules Ambleside. Some of the gentry dislike her, but the lower orders have a great regard for her. . . . I thought I should like to spend two or three days with you before going home; so, if it is not inconvenient to you, I will (D.V.) come on Monday and stay till Thursday. . . . I have truly enjoyed my visit here. I have seen a good many people, and all have been so marvellously kind; not the least so the family of Dr. Arnold. Miss Martineau I relish inexpressibly.'[1]

Miss Brontë paid the visit she here proposes to her friend, but only remained two or three days. She then returned home, and immediately began to suffer from her old enemy,

[1] To her father she writes under date December 15, 1850 (the letter is wrongly dated in *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle*)—

'Dear Papa,—I think I shall not come home till Thursday. If all be well I shall leave here on Monday and spend a day or two with Ellen Nussey. I have enjoyed my visit exceedingly. Sir J. K.-Shuttleworth has called several times and taken me out in his carriage. He seems very truly friendly; but, I am sorry to say, he looks pale and very much wasted. I greatly fear he will not live very long unless some change for the better soon takes place. Lady S. is ill too, and cannot go out. I have seen a good deal of Dr. Arnold's family, and like them much. As to Miss Martineau, I admire her and wonder at her more than I can say. Her powers of labour, of exercise, and social cheerfulness are beyond my comprehension. In spite of the unceasing activity of her colossal intellect she enjoys robust health. She is a taller, larger, and more strongly made woman than I had imagined from that first interview with her. She is very kind to me, though she must think I am a very insignificant person compared to herself. She has just been into the room to show

sickly and depressing headache. This was all the more trying to bear as she was obliged to take an active share in the household work, one servant being ill in bed, and the other, Tabby, aged upwards of eighty.

This visit to Ambleside did Miss Brontë much good, and gave her a stock of pleasant recollections, and fresh interests, to dwell upon in her solitary life. There are many references in her letters to Miss Martineau's character and kindness.

'She is certainly a woman of wonderful endowments, both intellectual and physical; and though I share few of her opinions, and regard her as fallible on certain points of judgment, I must still award her my sincerest esteem. The manner in which she combines the highest mental culture with the nicest discharge of feminine duties filled me with admiration, while her affectionate kindness earned my gratitude.' 'I think her good and noble qualities far outweighed her defects. It is my habit to consider the individual apart from his (or her) reputation, practice independent of theory, natural disposition isolated from acquired opinions. Harriet Martineau's person, practice, and character inspire me with the truest affection and respect.' 'You ask me whether Miss Martineau made me a convert to mesmerism. Scarcely; yet I heard miracles of its efficacy, and could hardly discredit the whole of what was told me. I even underwent a personal experiment; and though the result was not absolutely clear it was inferred that in time I should prove an excellent subject. The question of mesmerism will be discussed with little reserve, I believe, in a forthcoming work of Miss Martineau's; and I have some

me a chapter of her history which she is now writing, relating to the Duke of Wellington's character and his proceedings in the Peninsula. She wanted an opinion on it, and I was happy to be able to give a very approving one. She seems to understand and do him justice.

'You must not direct any more letters here, as they will not reach me after to-day. Hoping, dear papa, that you are well, and with kind regards to Tabby and Martha, I am your affectionate daughter,

'C. Brontë.'

painful anticipations of the manner in which other subjects, offering less legitimate ground for speculation, will be handled.'

Miss Martineau sends me the following account of the 'personal experiment' to which Miss Brontë refers:—'By the way, for the mesmeric experiment on C. B. I was not responsible. She was strangely pertinacious about that, and I *most* reluctant to bring it before her at all, we being alone, and I having no confidence in her nerves. Day after day she urged me to mesmerise her. I always, and quite truly, pleaded that I was too tired for success, for we had no opportunity till the end of the day. At last, on Sunday evening, we returned from early tea somewhere; I could not say I was tired, and she insisted. I stopped the moment she called out that she was under the influence, and I would not resume it.'

Miss Martineau has kindly permitted me to make use of one or two anecdotes which she remembers, and which refer to this period.

'One trait may interest you. Her admiration of Wellington brought it to my mind. One morning I brought her the first page of the chapter on the Peninsular War in my Introductory History, and said, "Tell me if this will do for a beginning," &c. I read the page or two to her, as we stood before the fire, and she looked up at me and stole her hand into mine, and to my amazement the tears were running down her cheeks. She said, "Oh! I do thank you! Oh! we are of one mind! Oh! I thank you for this justice to the man." I saw at once there was a touch of idolatry in the case, but it was a charming enthusiasm. . . . As to the lecture about which you ask, C. B. sat sideways to me. It was long, for I got interested and forgot the time. She kept her eyes on me the whole time, till her neck must have ached desperately. She stole up to the little platform on which I was standing, while the people dispersed, and as the light shone down into her eyes repeated (in my very

voice) "Is my son dead?" (Edward III.'s words at the windmill during the battle of Crecy). We came home in silence (a very little way). In the drawing-room the first thing I did was to light the lamp, and the first flare showed C. B. with large eyes, staring at me, and repeating "Is my son dead?"'

LETTER FROM C. B. TO MISS W.[1]

'Your last letter evinced such a sincere and discriminating admiration for Dr. Arnold that perhaps you will not be wholly uninterested in hearing that, during my late visit to Miss Martineau, I saw much more of Fox How and its inmates, and daily admired, in the widow and children[2] of one

[1] This letter was not addressed to Miss W(ooler), but to Mr. James Taylor. It is dated Jan. 15, 1851, and is contained in the packet of letters lent by Mr. Taylor to Mrs. Gaskell. It is now in the possession of Mr. Taylor's executors.

[2] Matthew Arnold, the most famous of the Arnold children, thus recalled one of these visits in his correspondence: 'I talked to Miss Brontë (past thirty and plain, with expressive grey eyes though) of her curates, of French novels, and her education in a school at Brussels.'

Miss Brontë in a letter to Mr. James Taylor, printed at length in *Charlotte Brontë and her Circle*, gives a further impression of the Arnolds.

'Mrs. Arnold is, indeed, as I judge from my own observations no less than from the unanimous testimony of all who really know her, a good and amiable woman; but the intellectual is not her forte, and she has no pretensions to power or completeness of character. The same remark, I think, applies to her daughters. You admire in them the kindliest feeling towards each other and their fellow creatures, and they offer in their home circle a beautiful example of family unity, and of that refinement which is sure to spring thence; but when the conversation turns on literature or any subject that offers a test for the intellect, you usually felt that their opinions were rather imitative than original, rather sentimental than sound. Those who have only seen Mrs. Arnold once will necessarily, I think, judge of her unfavourably; her manner on introduction disappointed me sensibly, as lacking that genuineness and simplicity one seemed to have a right to expect in the chosen life companion of Dr. Arnold. On my remarking as much to Mrs. Gaskell and Sir J. K.-Shuttleworth I was told for my consolation it was a "conventional manner," but that it vanished on closer acquaintance; fortunately this last assurance proved true. It is observable that Matthew Arnold, the

of the greatest and best men of his time, the possession of qualities the most estimable and endearing. Of my kind hostess herself I cannot speak in terms too high. Without being able to share all her opinions, philosophical, political, or religious—without adopting her theories—I yet find a worth and greatness in herself, and a consistency, benevolence, perseverance in her practice, such as wins the sincerest esteem and affection. She is not a person to be judged by her writings alone, but rather by her own deeds and life, than which nothing can be more exemplary or nobler. She seems to me the benefactress of Ambleside, yet takes no sort of credit to herself for her active and indefatigable philanthropy. The government of her household is admirably administered: all she does is well done, from the writing of a history down to the quietest female occupation. No sort of carelessness or neglect is allowed under her rule, and yet she is not over-

eldest son, and the author of the volume of poems to which you allude, inherits his mother's defect. Striking and prepossessing in appearance, his manner displeases from its seeming foppery. I own it caused me at first to regard him with regretful surprise; the shade of Dr. Arnold seemed to me to frown on his young representative. I was told, however, that "Mr. Arnold improved upon acquaintance." So it was: ere long a real modesty appeared under his assumed conceit, and some genuine intellectual aspirations, as well as high educational acquirements, displaced superficial affectations. I was given to understand that his theological opinions were very vague and unsettled, and indeed he betrayed as much in the course of conversation. Most unfortunate for him, doubtless, has been the untimely loss of his father.'

Thomas Arnold (1795–1842), the famous head-master of Rugby, had been dead some years when Charlotte Brontë visited Fox How, a pleasant house at Ambleside still occupied by members of his family. Matthew Arnold (1822–1888), distinguished alike as a poet and a critic, was just on the eve of his appointment as an inspector of schools at this time. He had published *Alaric at Rome* (1840), *Cromwell* (1843), *The Strayed Reveller* (1849) —three little volumes of verse, before 1851. His years of fame were all before him. He sent his *Poems* of 1853 to Miss Brontë, and the book is still in her husband's library. His poem on 'Haworth Churchyard' was first published in *Fraser's Magazine*, May 1855, and reprinted in *Poems*, 2 vols., 1877.

strict or too rigidly exacting: her servants and her poor neighbours love as well as respect her.

'I must not, however, fall into the error of talking too much about her, merely because my own mind is just now deeply impressed with what I have seen of her intellectual power and moral worth. Faults she has: but to me they appear very trivial weighed in the balance against her excellences.

'Your account of Mr. Atkinson tallies exactly with Miss Martineau's. She too said that placidity and mildness (rather than originality and power) were his external characteristics. She described him as a combination of the antique Greek sage with the European modern man of science. Perhaps it was mere perversity in me to get the notion that torpid veins, and a cold, slow-beating heart, lay under his marble outside. But he is a materialist: he serenely denies us our hope of immortality and quietly blots from man's future Heaven and the Life to come. That is why a savour of bitterness seasoned my feeling towards him.

'All you say of Mr. Thackeray is most graphic and characteristic. He stirs in me both sorrow and anger. Why should he lead so harassing a life? Why should his mocking tongue so perversely deny the better feelings of his better moods?'

For some time, whenever she was well enough in health and spirits, she had been employing herself upon 'Villette;' but she was frequently unable to write, and was both grieved and angry with herself for her inability.[1] In February she writes as follows to Mr. Smith:—

'Something you say about going to London; but the words are dreamy, and fortunately I am not obliged to hear or answer them. London and summer are many months away: our moors are all white with snow just now, and

[1] She writes to Mr. George Smith on January 19, 1851—

'The enclosed copy should have been returned ere this, if I had been able to attend to ordinary matters, but I grew worse after I wrote to you

little redbreasts come every morning to the window for crumbs. One can lay no plans three or four months beforehand. Besides, I don't deserve to go to London: nobody merits a change or a treat less. I secretly think, on the contrary, I ought to be put in prison, and kept on bread and water in solitary confinement—without even a letter from Cornhill—till I have written a book. One of two things would certainly result from such a mode of treatment pursued for twelve months; either I should come out at the end of that time with a three-volume MS. in my hand, or else with a condition of intellect that would exempt me ever after from literary efforts and expectations.' [1]

last and was very ill for some days. Weak I still continue, but believe I am getting better, and very grateful do I feel for the improvement—grateful for my father's sake no less than for my own.

'It made me sorrowful to hear that you too had been ill, but I trust you are now quite recovered. I thought you would hardly ever be ill; you looked so healthy, but over-anxiety and confining labour will undermine the strongest.

'I have not heard a word from Miss Martineau and conclude her silence is of no good omen.'

[1] There are some interesting omissions from this letter to her publisher, which is dated February 5, 1851:—

'Perhaps it is hardly necessary to trouble you with an answer to your last, as I have already written to Mr. Williams, and no doubt he will have told you that I have yielded with ignoble facility in the matter of *The Professor*. Still, it may be proper to make some attempt towards dignifying that act of submission by averring that it was done "under protest."

'*The Professor* has now had the honour of being rejected nine times by the "Tr–de" (three rejections go to your own share); you may affirm that you accepted it this last time, but that cannot be admitted; if it were only for the sake of symmetry and effect I must regard this martyrised MS. as repulsed, or at any rate withdrawn for the ninth time! Few, I flatter myself, have earned an equal distinction, and of course my feelings towards it can only be paralleled by those of a doting parent towards an idiot child. Its merits, I plainly perceive, will never be owned by anybody but Mr. Williams and me; very particular and unique must be our penetration, and I think highly of us both accordingly. You may

Meanwhile she was disturbed and distressed by the publication of Miss Martineau's 'Letters,' &c.;[1] they came down with a peculiar force and heaviness upon a heart that looked, with fond and earnest faith, to a future life as to the meeting-place with those who were 'loved and lost awhile.'

'February 11, 1851.

'My dear Sir,—Have you yet read Miss Martineau's and Mr. Atkinson's new work, "Letters on the Nature and Development of Man"? If you have not it would be worth your while to do so.

'Of the impression this book has made on me I will not

allege that that merit is not visible to the naked eye. Granted; but the smaller the commodity the more inestimable its value.

'You kindly propose to take *The Professor* into custody. Ah, no! His modest merit shrinks at the thought of going alone and unbefriended to a spirited publisher. Perhaps with slips of him you might light an occasional cigar, or you might remember to lose him somewhere, and a Cornhill functionary would gather him up and consign him to the repositories of waste paper, and thus he would prematurely find his way to the "butter man" and trunkmakers. No, I have put him by and locked him up, not indeed in my desk, where I could not tolerate the monotony of his demure Quaker countenance, but in a cupboard by himself.

'You touch upon invitations from baronets, &c. As you are well aware, a fondness for such invitations and an anxious desire to obtain them is my weak point. Aristocratic notice is what I especially covet, cultivate, and cling to. It does me so much good; it gives me such large, free, and congenial enjoyment. How happy I am when counselled or commended by a baronet or noticed by a lord!

'Those papers on the London poor are singularly interesting; to me they open a new and strange world, very dark, very dreary, very noisome in some of its recesses, a world that is fostering such a future as I scarcely dare imagine, it awakens thoughts not to be touched on in this foolish letter. The fidelity and simplicity of the letterpress details harmonise well with the daguerreotype illustrations.

'You must thank your mother and sisters for their kind remembrances and offer mine in return.'

[1] *Letters on the Laws of Man's Social Nature*, by Harriet Martineau and H. G. Atkinson, 1851.

now say much. It is the first exposition of avowed atheism and materialism I have ever read; the first unequivocal declaration of disbelief in the existence of a God or a future life I have ever seen. In judging of such exposition and declaration, one would wish entirely to put aside the sort of instinctive horror they awaken, and to consider them in an impartial spirit and collected mood. This I find it difficult to do. The strangest thing is that we are called on to rejoice over this hopeless blank—to receive this bitter bereavement as great gain—to welcome this unutterable desolation as a state of pleasant freedom. Who *could* do this if he would? Who *would* do it if he could?

'Sincerely, for my own part, do I wish to find and know the Truth; but if this be Truth, well may she guard herself with mysteries, and cover herself with a veil. If this be Truth, man or woman who beholds her can but curse the day he or she was born. I said, however, I would not dwell on what *I* thought; I wish to hear, rather, what some other person thinks, some one whose feelings are unapt to bias his judgment. Read the book, then, in an unprejudiced spirit, and candidly say what you think of it.[1] I mean, of course, if you have time—*not otherwise*.'

And yet she could not bear the contemptuous tone in which this work was spoken of by many critics; it made her more indignant than almost any other circumstance during my acquaintance with her. Much as she regretted the publication of the book, she could not see that it had given any one a right to sneer at any action, certainly prompted by no worldly motive.

'Your remarks on Miss Martineau and her book pleased me greatly, from their tone and spirit. I have even taken the

[1] 'I do most entirely agree with you in what you say about Miss Martineau's and Mr. Atkinson's book,' Miss Brontë writes to Mr. James Taylor (March 24, 1851). 'I deeply regret its publication for the lady's sake; it gives a death-blow to her future usefulness. Who can trust the word, or rely on the judgment, of an avowed atheist?'

liberty of transcribing for her benefit one or two phrases, because I know they will cheer her; she likes sympathy and appreciation (as all people do who deserve them); and most fully do I agree with you in the dislike you express of that hard, contemptuous tone in which her work is spoken of by many critics.'

Before I return from the literary opinions of the author to the domestic interests of the woman I must copy out what she felt and thought about 'The Stones of Venice.'[1]

'"The Stones of Venice" seem nobly laid and chiselled. How grandly the quarry of vast marbles is disclosed! Mr. Ruskin seems to me one of the few genuine writers, as distinguished from book-makers, of this age. His earnestness even amuses me in certain passages; for I cannot help laughing to think how utilitarians will fume and fret over his deep, serious (and, as *they* will think), fanatical reverence for Art. That pure and severe mind you ascribed to him speaks in every line. He writes like a consecrated priest of the Abstract and Ideal.

'I shall bring with me "The Stones of Venice;" all the foundations of marble and of granite, together with the mighty quarry out of which they were hewn; and, into the bargain, a small assortment of crotchets and dicta—the private property of one John Ruskin, Esq.'

As spring drew on the depression of spirits to which she was subject began to grasp her again, and 'to crush her with a day-and-night-mare.' She became afraid of sinking as low as she had done in the autumn; and, to avoid this, she prevailed on her old friend and schoolfellow to come and stay with her for a few weeks in March. She found great benefit from this companionship, both from the congenial society itself and from the self-restraint of thought

[1] The *Stones of Venice*, by John Ruskin, appeared in three volumes, 1851–2–3. Miss Brontë must, therefore, have received the first volume from Smith, Elder, & Co., who then published Mr. Ruskin's works.

imposed by the necessity of entertaining her and looking after her comfort. On this occasion Miss Brontë said, It will not do to get into the habit of running away from home, and thus temporarily evading an oppression instead of facing, wrestling with, and conquering it, or being conquered by it.'[1]

I shall now make an extract from one of her letters, which is purposely displaced as to time.[2] I quote it because

[1] On March 8 she writes to Mr. Smith—

'I have read *Rose Douglas*, read it with a tranquil but not a shallow pleasure; full well do I like it. It is a good book—so simple, so natural, so truthful, so graphic, so religious—in a word, so *Scottish* in the best and kindliest sense of the term. Surely it will succeed, for no critic can speak otherwise than well of it.

'I could not refrain from writing these few lines respecting it, and you must be forgiving should my note intrude on a busy moment.'

The letter is continued on March 11:—

'The preceding was written before I received yours; a few more lines must now be added.

'Do you know that the first part of your note is most dangerously suggestive? What a rich field of subject you point out in your allusions to Cornhill, &c.—a field at which I myself should only have ventured to glance like the serpent at Paradise; but when Adam himself opens the gates and shows the way in, what can the honest snake do but bend its crest in token of gratitude and glide rejoicingly through the aperture?

'But no! Don't be alarmed. You are all safe from Currer Bell—safe from his satire—safer from his eulogium. We cannot (or at least *I* cannot) write of our acquaintance with the consciousness that others will recognise their portraits, or that they themselves will know the hand which has sketched them. Under such circumstances the pencil would falter in the fingers and shrink alike from the indication of bold shades and brilliant lights (especially the last, because it would look like flattery); plain speaking would seem audacious, praise obtrusive.

'Were it possible that I could take you all fearlessly, like so many abstractions, or historical characters that had been dust a hundred years, could handle, analyse, delineate you, without danger of the picture being recognised either by yourselves or others, I should think my material abundant and rich. This, however, is no more possible than that the nurse should give the child the moon out of the sky. So—I repeat it—you are *very* safe.'

[2] Letter to Ellen Nussey, dated April 9, 1851.

it relates to a third offer of marriage which she had, and because I find that some are apt to imagine, from the extraordinary power with which she represented the passion of love in her novels, that she herself was easily susceptible of it.

'Could I ever feel enough for ——[1] to accept of him as a

'Papa was much pleased with Mr. Ruskin's pamphlet,* only he thought the scheme of amalgamation suggested towards the close—impracticable. For my part I regard the *brochure* as a refreshing piece of honest writing, good sense uttered by pure lips. The Puseyite priesthood will not relish it; it strips them mercilessly of their pompous pretensions.

'Was not Mr. Thackeray's speech at Macready's farewell dinner peculiarly characteristic? I fancied so from the outline I saw of it in the papers. It seemed to me scarcely to disguise a secret sneer at the whole concern—the hero and his worshippers—and indeed Mr. Macready's admirers exaggerate their enthusiasm. Your description of Mr. Forster made me smile; I can well fancy him in that state of ebullient emotion.

'I paused in a sort of wonder over what you say in referring to your new Indian undertaking. While earnestly wishing you all success in it I cannot but wish with at least equal earnestness that it may not bring too much additional care and labour.

'May not trade have its Alexanders as well as war? and does not many a man begin with a modest Macedon in the City and end by desiring another world for his speculations?

'But I suppose your work is your pleasure and your responsibility your strength, and very likely what a looker-on regards as a grievous burden is only the weight necessary to steady the arch. Your implied injunction to discretion is not uttered in a negligent ear, nor is Currer Bell insensible to the compliment of being told something about business; that he does not understand all the bearings of the communication by no means diminishes his gratification in receiving and looking upon it; he turns it in his hand as a savage would a new trinket or tool of unknown use, and likes without fully comprehending it.

'I hope Mr. Taylor will bear the voyage and the change of climate well.

'I am truly sorry to hear that your mother has not been well, and especially that her indisposition arose from so harassing a cause as family annoyance of any kind; give my kind regards to her and your sisters.'

[1] 'Mr. Taylor.' This was James Taylor, who, as managing clerk in the employment of Smith, Elder, & Co., is frequently mentioned in the correspondence. He was, soon after Charlotte Brontë refused to marry him,

* *Notes on the Construction of Sheepfolds.* By John Ruskin, 1851.

husband? Friendship—gratitude—esteem—I have; but each moment he came near me, and that I could see his eyes fastened on me, my veins ran ice. Now that he is away I feel far more gentle towards him; it is only close by that I grow rigid, stiffening with a strange mixture of apprehension and anger, which nothing softens but his retreat and a perfect subduing of his manner. I did not want to be proud, nor intend to be proud, but I was forced to be so. Most true it is that we are overruled by One above us, that in His hands our very will is as clay in the hands of the potter.'

I have now named all the offers of marriage she ever received, until that was made which she finally accepted. The gentleman referred to in this letter retained so much regard for her as to be her friend to the end of her life, a circumstance to his credit and to hers.

Before her friend Ellen took her departure Mr. Brontë caught cold, and continued for some weeks much out of health, with an attack of bronchitis. His spirits, too, became much depressed, and all his daughter's efforts were directed towards cheering him.

When he grew better, and had regained his previous strength, she resolved to avail herself of an invitation which she had received some time before to pay a visit in London. This year, 1851, was, as every one remembers, the time of the Great Exhibition; but even with that attraction in prospect she did not intend to stay there long; and, as usual, she made an agreement with her friends, before finally accepting their offered hospitality, that her sojourn at their house was to be as quiet as ever, since any other way of proceeding disagreed with her both mentally and physically. She never looked excited except for a moment, when something in conversation called her out; but she often felt so,

despatched by Smith, Elder, & Co. to Bombay, where for a few years he conducted the branch house of Smith, Taylor, & Co. That venture was unsuccessful, but Mr. Taylor prospered in Bombay, married, and shortly before his death was elected sheriff. The inscription on his tomb in the Bombay cemetery runs, 'James Taylor, died April 29, 1874, aged 57.'

even about comparative trifles, and the exhaustion of reaction was sure to follow. Under such circumstances she always became extremely thin and haggard; yet she averred that the change invariably did her good afterwards.[1]

Her preparations in the way of dress for this visit, in the

[1] There are five new letters, of dates prior to this London visit, three addressed to Mr. Smith and two to his mother.

'March 31, 1851.

'My dear Sir,—Mrs. Gaskell's letter had not remained unanswered a week, but the fact is she was taken with a little fit of impatience, whereof she has duly recorded her confession and repentance, and all is right now.

'I am in very reasonably good health, thank you, and always in as good spirits as I can manage to be.

'I dare offer no word of sympathy to Cornhill, hard-tasked as are its energies just now. Since you are doing right and serving with fidelity and courage in the ranks of duty, you *must* in a measure be happy—*more* happy than you have leisure to recognise. Dr. Forbes will tell you and tell you truly, that successful labour to a good end is one of the best gifts of Heaven to man, and Duty, your present sovereign lady, though she wears an austere brow, has also a grateful heart, and will one day repay loyal service with noble recompense.

'What you say about relinquishing your proposed Continental trip stirs in me a feeble spirit of emulation. By way of imitation on a small scale I would fain give up all thoughts of going to London or elsewhere this spring or summer. Were I but as sure as you are of being able to work to some purpose, gladly, gladly would I make the sacrifice—indeed, it would be no sacrifice. I have before this found in absorbing work a curative and comforting power not to be yielded by relaxation.

'The *Stones of Venice* is a splendid and most tasteful volume, speaking of the mere outside and illustrations; the letterpress I have as yet only glanced over, catching sparkles of living eloquence here and there, but I hold in reserve the pleasure of studying it thoroughly.

'You speak highly of Mr. Taylor, and I think deservedly so. I believe he is a good man, firm-principled, right-minded, and reliable. His belongs to that better order of character to which it is difficult to render full justice in an early stage of acquaintance. To be appreciated he must be known. In him the kernel is not without its husk; and you must have time and opportunity to penetrate beneath the outside, to get inured to the *manner* before you even understand the *man*. So I think at least.

'With inly felt wishes for your success, and renewed and earnest

gay time of that gay season, were singularly in accordance with her feminine taste; quietly anxious to satisfy her love

injunctions that you will *never* permit the task of writing to Currer Bell to add however slightly to your burdens (for, whether you think so or not, he is a disciplined person who can endure long fastings and exist on very little food—just what Fate chooses to give—and indeed can do without), I am sincerely yours,

'C. BRONTË.

'George Smith, Esq.'

'Haworth: April 17, 1851.

My dear Mrs. Smith,—Before I received your note I was nursing a comfortable and complacent conviction that I had quite made up my mind not to go to London this year; the Great Exhibition was nothing—only a series of bazaars under a magnified hot-house, and I myself was in a Pharisaical state of superiority to temptation. But Pride has its fall. I read your invitation, and immediately felt a great wish to descend from my stilts. Not to conceal the truth, I should like to come and see you extremely well.

'I think with you, however, that June would be the best time to name—better than an earlier period. My father, though now much better than he was, has usually somewhat variable health throughout the spring, and till warmer weather fairly sets in I should hardly think it right or feel happy to leave him.

'Mr. Taylor, whose brief visit gave me great pleasure, told me, to my regret, that you had all been ill of the influenza, and that Miss Smith especially had suffered. This I was very sorry to hear, because she is not one of the strongest, and I fear would not hastily lose the debilitating effects of influenza. I trust she is now quite recovered.

'With kindest regards to her and all your circle, and with my father's acknowledgment and response to your kind remembrance of him,

'I am, my dear Mrs. Smith,

'Sincerely yours,

'C. BRONTË.

'P.S.—A sudden reproach occurs to me. When I was last in London I professed to be working a cushion of which I meant when finished to make an offering to you. That cushion—or rather the canvas which ought ere this to have matured into a cushion—lies neatly papered up in a drawer, just as it was last summer. Could even Cardinal Wiseman grant absolution for shortcomings of this description? But you shall have a cushion, and a pretty one, only you must not be too particular in asking me how I came by it. You will indeed have the perfect goodness to suppose it of my work; the circumstance of its being from the same

for modest, dainty, neat attire, and not regardless of the becoming, yet remembering consistency, both with her pattern as the one I *intended* to manufacture will favour this benevolent delusion. On second thoughts I might quite well have passed it off as such, if I had not gone and spoiled that plan by the above confession.'

'April 19, 1851.

'My dear Sir,—My scheme of emulation appears to have terminated in a somewhat egregious failure, as perhaps your mother may have told you. One can't help it. One does not profess to be made out of granite.

'Your project, depend on it, has been quite providentially put a stop to. And do you really think I would have gone to the Rhine this summer? Do you think I would have partaken in all that unearned pleasure?

'Now listen to a serious word. You might *possibly* have persuaded me to go (I do not *think* that you would, but it does not become me to be very positive on that point, seeing that proofs of inflexibility do not abound), yet had I gone I should not have been truly happy; self-reproach would have gnawed at the root of enjoyment; it is only drones and wasps who willingly eat honey they have not hived, and I protest against being classed with either of these insects. Ergo, though I am sorry for your own and your sister's sake that your castle on the Rhine has turned out a castle in the air, I am not at all sorry for mine.

'May I be so egotistical as to say a word or two about my health? Two ladies, neither of them unknown to fame, whom I reverence for their talents and love for their amiability, but of whom I would beg the small favour of being allowed to remain in tolerable health, seem determined between them that I shall be a sort of invalid; and, chiefly owing to them, I am occasionally kept in hot water by people asking me how I am. If I do not answer the letters of these ladies by return of post—which, without being precisely a person overwhelmed with business, one may not always have time to do—flying rumours presently reach me derogatory to my physical condition. Twice kind but misled strangers living in southern counties have with the greatest goodness written to ask me to their houses for the benefit of a milder climate, offering every "accommodation suitable to an invalid lady."

'This, in one sense, touches me with almost painful gratitude, but in another it makes me a little nervous. Why may not I be well like other people? I think I am reasonably well—not strong or capable of much continuous exertion (which I do not remember that I ever was), and apt, no doubt, to look haggard if over-fatigued, but otherwise I have no ailment, and I maintain that I am well, and hope (D.V.) to continue so awhile. I hope you are well too. You may be sure I was very glad to

general appearance and with her means, in every selection she made.

see Mr. Taylor, and that he was most cordially welcome at Haworth. Please to tell Mr. Williams that I dare on no account come to London till he is friends with me, which I am sure he cannot be, as I have never heard from him for nearly three months.

'Will you have the goodness to forward the enclosed note to Dr. Forbes, whose address I do not know? It is an acknowledgment of his gift of his little book, the lecture, which I like very much.

'I am
'Yours sincerely,
'C. BRONTË.

'George Smith, Esq.'

'May 12, 1851.

'My dear Sir,—I fear it cannot be denied that Mr. Thackeray has actually gone and written a poem. The *whole* of the Mayday Ode is not poetry—*that* I will maintain; it opens with decent prose—but at the fourth stanza—"I felt a thrill of love and awe"—it begins to swell; towards the middle it waxes strong and rises high, takes a tone sustained and sweet, fills the ear with music, the heart with glow and expansion—becomes, in a word, POETRY.

'Shame and sin that the man who *can* write thus should write thus so seldom!

. . . . . .

'Different indeed is Mr. Ruskin. (I have read the *Stones of Venice* through.) Thackeray has no love for his art or his work: he neglects it; he mocks at it; he trifles with it. Ruskin—for *his* art and *his* work—has a deep, serious passion. We smile sometimes at Ruskin's intense earnestness of feeling towards things that *can* feel nothing for him in return—for instance, when he breaks out in an apostrophe to a sepulchre, "O pure and lovely Monument—My most beloved in Italy—that land of Mourning!"

'I wondered to myself once or twice whether there would be any chance of hearing Mr. Ruskin's lectures. No doubt they will be blent throughout with sarcasm calculated to vex one to the heart; but still just out of curiosity, one would like to know what he will say.

'I do not quite understand about the "Guild of Literature," though I have seen it mentioned in the papers; you must be kind enough to explain it better when I see you.

'Of course I am not in the least looking forwards to going to London, nor reckoning on it, nor allowing the matter to take any particular place in my thoughts; no, I am very sedulously cool and nonchalant. Moreover I am not going to be glad to see anybody there; *gladness* is an

'By the by, I meant to ask you when you went to Leeds to do a small errand for me, but fear your hands will be too full of business. It was merely this: in case you chanced to be in any shop where the lace cloaks, both black and white, of which I spoke, were sold, to ask their price. I suppose they would hardly like to send a few to Haworth to

exaggeration of sentiment one does not permit oneself; to be *pleased* is quite enough—and not too well pleased either, only with pleasure of a faint, tepid kind, and to a stinted, penurious amount. Perhaps when I see your mother and Mr. Williams again I shall just be able to get up a weak flicker of gratification, but that will be all. From even this effort I shall be exempt on seeing *you*. Authors and publishers are never expected to meet with any other than hostile feelings and on shy and distant terms. They never ought to have to shake hands; they should just bow to each other and pass by on opposite sides, keeping several yards distance between them. And besides, if obliged to communicate by post, they should limit what they have to say to concise notes of about three lines apiece, which reminds me that this is too long, and that it is time I thanked you for sending the dividend, and begged with proper form to be permitted to subscribe myself

'Respectfully yours,

'C. Brontë.

'George Smith, Esq.'

'May 20, 1851.

'My dear Mrs. Smith,—It is pleasant to hear that Mr. Thackeray still brings a lively appetite to a good dinner; I did not know whether his nervous anxiety about the forthcoming lectures might not possibly have impaired it. One of the prettiest sights of the Exhibition, I should think, would be to see Jacob Omnium conducting hither and thither his tiny and fragile charge, W. M. Thackeray, Esq. You can keep your little socks for Jacob Omnium's nurseling if you like. If they are too large one might (in another year's time) knit a smaller pair for the purpose.

'If all be well, and if my father continues in his present satisfactory state of health, I shall be at liberty to come to London on Wednesday week, *i.e.* the 29th. I will not say much about being glad to see you all. Long ago, when I was a little girl, I received a somewhat sharp lesson on the duty of being glad in peace and quietness, in fear and moderation; this lesson did me good, and has never been forgotten.

'Should there be any objection to the day I have fixed, you will be kind enough to tell me. If I do not hear from you I shall conclude

be looked at; indeed, if they cost very much it would be useless, but if they are reasonable and they would send them I should like to see them; and also some chemisettes of small size (the full woman's size don't fit me), both of simple style for every day and good quality for best.'[1] . . . 'It appears I could not rest satisfied when I was well off. I told you I had taken one of the black lace mantles, but when I came to try it with the black satin dress, with which I should chiefly want to wear it, I found the effect was far from good; the beauty of the lace was lost, and it looked somewhat brown and rusty; I wrote to Mr. Stocks, requesting him to change it for a *white* mantle of the same price; he was extremely courteous and sent to London for one, which I have got this morning. The price is less, being but 1*l.* 14*s.*; it is pretty, neat, and light, looks well on black; and, upon reasoning the matter over, I came to the philosophic conclusion that it would be no shame for a person of my means to wear a cheaper thing; so I think I shall take it, and if you ever see it and call it "trumpery" so much the worse.[2]

'Do you know that I was in Leeds on the very same day with you—last Wednesday? I had thought of telling you where I was going, and having your help and company in buying a bonnet, &c., but then I reflected this would merely be making a selfish use of you, so I determined to manage or mismanage the matter alone. I went to Hurst & Hall's for the bonnet, and got one which seemed grave and quiet there amongst all the splendours; but now it looks infinitely

that it is approved. I should come by the express train which arrives in Euston Square at 10 P.M.

'With kindest regards—my father's as well as my own—to you and yours,

'I am, my dear Mrs. Smith,

'Yours very sincerely,

'Mrs. Smith, 76 Gloucester Terrace.' 'C. BRONTË.

[1] From a letter to Ellen Nussey, dated April 12, 1851.

[2] From a letter to Ellen Nussey, dated April 23, 1851.

too gay with its pink lining. I saw some beautiful silks of pale sweet colours, but had not the spirit nor the means to launch out at the rate of five shillings per yard, and went and bought a black silk at three shillings after all. I rather regret this, because papa says he would have lent me a sovereign if he had known. I believe, if you had been there, you would have forced me to get into debt.[1] . . . I really can no more come to Birstall before I go to London than I can fly. I have quantities of sewing to do, as well as household matters to arrange, before I leave, as they will clean, &c., in my absence. Besides, I am grievously afflicted with the headache, which I trust to change of air for relieving; but meantime, as it proceeds from the stomach, it makes me very thin and grey; neither you nor anybody else would fatten me up or put me into good condition for the visit; it is fated otherwise. No matter. Calm your passion; yet I am glad to see it. Such spirit seems to prove health. Good-bye, in haste.

'Your poor mother is like Tabby, Martha, and papa; all these fancy I am somehow, by some mysterious process, to be married in London, or to engage myself to matrimony. How I smile internally! How groundless and improbable is the idea! Papa seriously told me yesterday that if I married and left him he should give up housekeeping and go into lodgings!' [2]

I copy the following, for the sake of the few words describing the appearance of the heathery moors in late summer:—

TO SYDNEY DOBELL, ESQ.

'May 24, 1851.

'My dear Sir,—I hasten to send Mrs. Dobell the autograph. It was the word "Album" that frightened me: I thought she wished me to write a sonnet on purpose for it, which I could not do.

'Your proposal respecting a journey to Switzerland is

[1] Letter to Ellen Nussey, dated May 10, 1851.

[2] Letter to Ellen Nussey, dated May 21, 1851.

deeply kind; it draws me with the force of a mighty Temptation, but the stern Impossible holds me back. No! I cannot go to Switzerland this summer.

'Why did the editor of the "Eclectic" erase that most powerful and pictorial passage? He could not be insensible to its beauty; perhaps he thought it profane. Poor man!

'I know nothing of such an orchard country as you describe. I have never seen such a region. Our hills only confess the coming of summer by growing green with young fern and moss, in secret little hollows. Their bloom is reserved for autumn; then they burn with a kind of dark glow, different, doubtless, from the blush of garden blossoms. About the close of next month I expect to go to London, to pay a brief and quiet visit. I fear chance will not be so propitious as to bring you to town while I am there; otherwise how glad I should be if you would call! With kind regards to Mrs. Dobell, believe me sincerely yours,

'C. Brontë.'

Her next letter is dated from London.[1]

'June 2.

'I came here on Wednesday, being summoned a day sooner than I expected, in order to be in time for Thackeray's second lecture, which was delivered on Thursday afternoon. This, as you may suppose, was a genuine treat to me, and I was glad not to miss it. It was given in Willis's Rooms, where the Almack's balls are held—a great painted and gilded saloon with long sofas for benches. The audience was said to be the cream of London society, and it looked so. I did not at all expect the great lecturer would know me or notice me under these circumstances, with admiring duchesses and countesses seated in rows before him; but he met me as I entered—shook hands—took me to his mother, whom I had not before seen, and introduced me. She is a fine, handsome, young-looking old lady; was very gracious, and called with one of her granddaughters next day.

[1] From 112 Gloucester Terrace, Hyde Park. It was written to Ellen Nussey.

'Thackeray called, too, separately. I had a long talk with him, and I think he knows me now a little better than he did; but of this I cannot yet be sure; he is a great and strange man. There is quite a *furore* for his lectures. They are a sort of essays, characterised by his own peculiar originality and power, and delivered with a finished taste and ease, which is felt, but cannot be described. Just before the lecture began somebody came behind me, leaned over, and said, "Permit me, as a Yorkshire man, to introduce myself." I turned round—saw a strange, not handsome face, which puzzled me for half a minute, and then I said, "You are Lord Carlisle."[1] He nodded and smiled; he talked a few minutes very pleasantly and courteously.

'Afterwards came another man with the same plea, that he was a Yorkshire man, and this turned out to be Mr. Monckton Milnes.[2] Then came Dr. Forbes, whom I was sincerely glad to see. On Friday I went to the Crystal Palace;[3] it is a marvellous, stirring, bewildering sight—a mixture of a genii palace and a mighty bazaar, but it is not much in my way; I liked the lecture better. On Saturday I saw the Exhibition at Somerset House; about half a dozen of the pictures are good and interesting, the rest of little worth. Sunday—yesterday—was a day to be marked with a white stone: through most of the day I was very happy, without being tired or over-excited. In the afternoon I went to hear D'Aubigné, the great Protestant French preacher;[4] it was

[1] This Lord Carlisle was George William Frederick Howard, 7th Earl (1802–1864). He won the Chancellor's prize for Latin verse, and the Newdegate in 1821, succeeded his father in the earldom in 1848, and wrote *A Diary in Turkish and Greek Waters*, 1853.

[2] Afterwards Lord Houghton (1809–1885). Wrote *Poems of Many Years* (1838), *Life of Keats* (1848), and other works.

[3] It will be remembered that the Great Exhibition was called the Crystal Palace, and that the building was at this time in Hyde Park.

[4] Jean Henri Merle d'Aubigné (1794–1872) was pastor of the French Protestant Church at Hamburg. He wrote a *History of the Reformation* and other works.

pleasant—half sweet, half sad—and strangely suggestive, to hear the French language once more. For health, I have so far got on very fairly, considering that I came here far from well.'

The lady who accompanied Miss Brontë to the lecture of Thackeray's alluded to says that, soon after they had taken their places, she was aware that he was pointing out her companion to several of his friends, but she hoped that Miss Brontë herself would not perceive it. After some time, however, during which many heads had been turned round, and many glasses put up, in order to look at the author of 'Jane Eyre,' Miss Brontë said, 'I am afraid Mr. Thackeray has been playing me a trick;' but she soon became too much absorbed in the lecture to notice the attention which was being paid to her, except when it was directly offered, as in the case of Lord Carlisle and Mr. Monckton Milnes. When the lecture was ended Mr. Thackeray came down from the platform, and making his way towards her asked her for her opinion. This she mentioned to me not many days afterwards, adding remarks almost identical with those which I subsequently read in 'Villette,' where a similar action on the part of M. Paul Emanuel is related.

'As our party left the Hall he stood at the entrance; he saw and knew me, and lifted his hat; he offered his hand in passing, and uttered the words, "Qu'en dites-vous?"—question eminently characteristic, and reminding me, even in this his moment of triumph, of that inquisitive restlessness, that absence of what I considered desirable self-control, which were amongst his faults. He should not have cared just then to ask what I thought, or what anybody thought; but he *did* care, and he was too natural to conceal, too impulsive to repress, his wish. Well! if I blamed his overeagerness I liked his *naïveté*. I would have praised him; I had plenty of praise in my heart; but, alas! no words on my lips. Who *has* words at the right moment? I stammered

some lame expressions; but was truly glad when other people, coming up with profuse congratulations, covered my deficiency by their redundancy.'

As they were preparing to leave the room her companion saw with dismay that many of the audience were forming themselves into two lines, on each side of the aisle down which they had to pass before reaching the door. Aware that any delay would only make the ordeal more trying, her friend took Miss Brontë's arm in hers, and they went along the avenue of eager and admiring faces. During this passage through the 'cream of society' Miss Brontë's hand trembled to such a degree that her companion feared lest she should turn faint and be unable to proceed; and she dared not express her sympathy or try to give her strength by any touch or word, lest it might bring on the crisis she dreaded.

Surely such thoughtless manifestation of curiosity is a blot on the scutcheon of true politeness! The rest of the account of this her longest visit to London shall be told in her own words.[1]

[1] In a letter to Ellen Nussey, dated June 11, 1851.

There is a letter from Miss Brontë to her father, dated June 7, and written from 112 Gloucester Terrace, Hyde Park:—

'I was very glad to hear that you continued in pretty good health, and that Mr. Cartman came to help you on Sunday. I fear you will not have had a very comfortable week in the dining-room; but by this time I suppose the parlour reformation will be nearly completed, and you will soon be able to return to your old quarters. The letter you sent me this morning was from Mary Taylor. She continues well and happy in New Zealand, and her shop seems to answer well. The French newspaper duly arrived. Yesterday I went for the second time to the Crystal Palace. We remained in it about three hours, and I must say I was more struck with it on this occasion than at my first visit. It is a wonderful place—vast, strange, new, and impossible to describe. Its grandeur does not consist in *one* thing, but in the unique assemblage of *all* things. Whatever human industry has created you find there, from the great compartments filled with railway engines and boilers, with mill machinery in full work, with splendid carriages of all kinds, with harness of every description, to the glass-covered and velvet-

'I sit down to write to you this morning in an inexpressibly flat state; having spent the whole of yesterday and the day before in a gradually increasing headache, which grew at last rampant and violent, ended with excessive sickness, and this morning I am quite weak and washy. I hoped to leave my headaches behind me at Haworth; but it seems I brought them carefully packed in my trunk, and very much have they been in my way since I came. . . . Since I wrote last I have seen various things worth describing, Rachel, the great French actress, amongst the number. But to-day I really have no pith for the task. I can only wish you good-bye with all my heart.

'I cannot boast that London has agreed with me well this time; the oppression of frequent headache, sickness, and a low tone of spirits has poisoned many moments which might otherwise have been pleasant. Sometimes I have felt

spread stands loaded with the most gorgeous work of the goldsmith and silversmith, and the carefully guarded caskets full of real diamonds and pearls worth hundreds of thousands of pounds. It may be called a bazaar or a fair, but it is such a bazaar or fair as Eastern genii might have created. It seems as if magic only could have gathered this mass of wealth from all the ends of the earth—as if none but supernatural hands could have arranged it thus, with such a blaze and contrast of colours and marvellous power of effect. The multitude filling the great aisles seems ruled and subdued by some invisible influence. Amongst the thirty thousand souls that peopled it the day I was there not one loud noise was to be heard, not one irregular movement seen; the living tide rolls on quietly, with a deep hum like the sea heard from the distance.

'Mr. Thackeray is in high spirits about the success of his lectures. It is likely to add largely both to his fame and purse. He has, however, deferred this week's lecture till next Thursday, at the earnest petition of the duchesses and marchionesses, who, on the day it should have been delivered, were necessitated to go down with the Queen and Court to Ascot Races. I told him I thought he did wrong to put it off on their account, and I think so still. The amateur performance of Bulwer's play for the Guild of Literature has likewise been deferred on account of the races. I hope, dear papa, that you, Mr. Nicholls, and all at home continue well. Tell Martha to take her scrubbing and cleaning in moderation and not overwork herself. With kind regards to her and Tabby.'

this hard, and have been tempted to murmur at Fate, which compels me to comparative silence and solitude for eleven months in the year, and in the twelfth, while offering social enjoyment, takes away the vigour and cheerfulness which should turn it to account. But circumstances are ordered for us, and we must submit.[1]

'Your letter [2] would have been answered yesterday, but I was already gone out before post time, and was out all day. People are very kind, and perhaps I shall be glad of what I have seen afterwards, but it is often a little trying at the time. On Thursday the Marquis of Westminster asked me to a great party, to which I was to go with Mrs. D(avenport), a beautiful and, I think, a kind woman too; but this I resolutely declined. On Friday I dined at the Shuttleworths' and met Mrs. D(avenport) and Mr. Monckton Milnes. On Saturday I went to hear and see Rachel; a wonderful sight—terrible as if the earth had cracked deep at your feet, and revealed a glimpse of hell. I shall never forget it. She made me shudder to the marrow of my bones; in her some fiend had certainly taken up an incarnate home. She is not a woman; she is a snake; she is the ——. On Sunday I went to the Spanish Ambassador's Chapel, where Cardinal Wiseman, in his archiepiscopal robes and mitre, held a confirmation. The whole scene was impiously theatrical. Yesterday (Monday) I was sent for at ten to breakfast with Mr. Rogers, the patriarch poet. Mrs. D(avenport) and Lord Glenelg were there; no one else: this certainly proved a most calm, refined, and intellectual treat. After breakfast Sir David Brewster [3] came to take us to the Crystal Palace. I had rather dreaded this, for Sir David is a man of profoundest science, and I feared it would be impossible to understand

[1] This sentence is from a letter to Ellen Nussey, dated June 19, 1851.

[2] A letter to Ellen Nussey, dated June 24, 1851.

[3] Sir David Brewster (1781–1868). Born at Jedburgh. Was knighted in 1832. Published, among other works, a *Life of Newton* (1828); *Letters on Natural Magic* (1831); *More Worlds than One* (1854).

his explanations of the mechanism, &c.; indeed, I hardly knew how to ask him questions. I was spared all the trouble: without being questioned he gave information in the kindest and simplest manner. After two hours spent at the Exhibition, and where, as you may suppose, I was *very* tired, we had to go to Lord Westminster's and spend two hours more in looking at the collection of pictures in his splendid gallery.'[1]

[1] Two letters to her father from London (which have already been printed) cover much the same ground.

'112 Gloucester Terrace, Hyde Park,
'London: June 17, 1851.

'Dear Papa,—I write a line in haste to tell you that I find they will not let me leave London till next Tuesday; and, as I have promised to spend a day or two with Mrs. Gaskell on my way home, it will probably be Friday or Saturday in next week before I return to Haworth. Martha will thus have a few days' more time, and must not hurry or overwork herself. Yesterday I saw Cardinal Wiseman and heard him speak. It was at a meeting of the Roman Catholic Society of St. Vincent de Paul; the Cardinal presided. He is a big, portly man, something of the shape of Mr. Morgan; he has not merely a double but a treble and quadruple chin; he has a very large mouth with oily lips, and looks as if he would relish a good dinner with a bottle of wine after it. He came swimming into the room smiling, simpering, and bowing like a fat old lady, and sat down very demure in his chair and looked the picture of a sleek hypocrite. He was dressed in black, like a bishop or dean in plain clothes, but wore scarlet gloves and a brilliant scarlet waistcoat. A bevy of inferior priests surrounded him, many of them very dark-looking and sinister men. The Cardinal spoke in a smooth whining manner, just like a canting Methodist preacher. The audience seemed to look up to him as to a god. A spirit of the hottest zeal pervaded the whole meeting. I was told afterwards that except myself and the person who accompanied me there was not a single Protestant present. All the speeches turned on the necessity of straining every nerve to make converts to Popery. It is in such a scene that one feels what the Catholics are doing. Most persevering and enthusiastic are they in their work! Let Protestants look to it. It cheered me much to hear that you continue pretty well. Take every care of yourself. Remember me kindly to Tabby and Martha, also to Mr. Nicholls, and believe me, dear papa, your affectionate daughter,

'C. Brontë.'

To another friend [1] she writes—

'Ellen Nussey may have told you that I have spent a month in London this summer. When you come you shall ask what questions you like on that point, and I will answer to the best of my stammering ability. Do not press me much on the subject of the "Crystal Palace." I went there five times, and certainly saw some interesting things, and

'112 Gloucester Terrace:
'June 26, 1851.

'Dear Papa,—I have not yet been able to get away from London, but if all be well I shall go to-morrow, stay two days with Mrs. Gaskell at Manchester, and return home on Monday, 30th, *without fail*. During this last week or ten days I have seen many things, some of them very interesting, and have also been in much better health than I was during the first fortnight of my stay in London. Sir James and Lady Shuttleworth have really been very kind, and most scrupulously attentive. They desire their regards to you, and send all manner of civil messages. The Marquis of Westminster and the Earl of Ellesmere each sent me an order to see their private collection of pictures, which I enjoyed very much. Mr. Rogers, the patriarch poet, now eighty-seven years old, invited me to breakfast with him. His breakfasts, you must understand, are celebrated throughout Europe for their peculiar refinement and taste. He never admits at that meal more than four persons to his table—himself and three guests. The morning I was there I met Lord Glenelg and Mrs. Davenport, a relation of Lady Shuttleworth's, and a very beautiful and fashionable woman. The visit was very interesting; I was glad that I had paid it after it was over. An attention that pleased and surprised me more, I think, than any other was the circumstance of Sir David Brewster, who is one of the first scientific men of his day, coming to take me over the Crystal Palace and pointing out and explaining the most remarkable curiosities. You will know, dear papa, that I do not mention those things to boast of them, but merely because I think they will give you pleasure. Nobody, I find, thinks the worse of me for avoiding publicity and declining to go to large parties, and everybody seems truly courteous and respectful, a mode of behaviour which makes me grateful, as it ought to do. Good-bye till Monday. Give my best regards to Mr. Nicholls, Tabby, and Martha, and believe me your affectionate daughter,

'C. Brontë.'

[1] This letter was written to Miss Wooler, and is dated Haworth, July 14, 1851.

the *coup d'œil* is striking and bewildering enough; but I never was able to get up any raptures on the subject, and each renewed visit was made under coercion rather than my own free will. It is an excessively bustling place, and, after all, its wonders appeal too exclusively to the eye and rarely touch the heart or head. I make an exception to the last assertion, in favour of those who possess a large range of scientific knowledge. Once I went with Sir David Brewster, and perceived that he looked on objects with other eyes than mine.'

Miss Brontë returned from London by Manchester, and paid us a visit of a couple of days at the end of June. The weather was so intensely hot, and she herself so much fatigued with her London sight-seeing, that we did little but sit indoors, with open windows, and talk. The only thing she made a point of exerting herself to procure was a present for Tabby. It was to be a shawl, or rather a large handkerchief, such as she could pin across her neck and shoulders, in the old-fashioned country manner. Miss Brontë took great pains in seeking out one which she thought would please the old woman.

On her arrival at home she addressed the following letter to the friend with whom she had been staying in London:—

'Haworth: July 1, 1851.

'My dear Mrs. Smith,—Once more I am at home, where, I am thankful to say, I found my father very well. The journey to Manchester was a little hot and dusty, but otherwise pleasant enough. The two stout gentlemen who filled a portion of the carriage when I got in quitted it at Rugby, and two other ladies and myself had it to ourselves the rest of the way. The visit to Mrs. Gaskell formed a cheering break in the journey. Haworth Parsonage is rather a contrast; yet even Haworth Parsonage does not look gloomy in this bright summer weather; it is somewhat still, but with the windows open I can hear a bird or two singing on

certain thorn trees in the garden. My father and the servants think me looking better than when I left home, and I certainly feel better myself for the change. You are too much like your son to render it advisable I should say much about your kindness during my visit. However, one cannot help (like Captain Cuttle) making a note of these matters. Papa says I am to thank you in his name, and offer you his respects, which I do accordingly.—With truest regards to all your circle believe me very sincerely yours, C. Brontë.' [1]

[1] She wrote on the same date to Mr. George Smith—

'After a month's voyaging I have cast anchor once more—in a rocky and lonely little cove, no doubt, but still safe enough. The visit to Mrs. Gaskell on my way home let me down easily; though I only spent two days with her they were very pleasant. She lives in a large, cheerful, airy house, quite out of Manchester smoke; a garden surrounds it, and, as in this hot weather the windows were kept open, a whispering of leaves and perfume of flowers always pervaded the rooms. Mrs. Gaskell herself is a woman of whose conversation and company I should not soon tire. She seems to me kind, clever, animated, and unaffected; her husband is a good and kind man too.

'I went to church by myself on Sunday morning (they are Unitarians). On my return shortly before the family came home from chapel the servant said there was a letter for me. I wondered from whom, not expecting my father to write, and not having given the address elsewhere. Of course I was not at all pleased when the small problem was solved by the letter being brought; I never care for hearing from you the least in the world. Comment on the purport of your note is unnecessary. I am glad, yet hardly dare permit myself to congratulate till the manuscript is fairly created and found to be worthy of the hand, pen, and mind whence it is to emanate. This promise to go down into the country is all very well; yet secretly I cannot but wish that a sort of "chamber in the wall" might be prepared at Cornhill, furnished (besides the bed, table, stool, and candlestick which the Shunammite "set" for Elisha) with a desk, pens, ink, and paper. There the prophet might be received and lodged, subject to a system kind (perhaps) yet firm; roused each morning at six punctually, by the contrivance of that virtuous self-acting couch which casts from it its too fondly clinging inmate; served, on being duly arrayed, with a *slight* breakfast of tea and toast; then, with the exception of a crust at one, no further gastronomic interruption to be allowed till 7 P.M., at which time the greatest and most industrious of modern authors should be summoned by the most spirited and vigilant of modern publishers to

a meal, comfortable and comforting—in short, a good dinner—elegant, copious, convivial (in moderation)—of which they should partake together in the finest spirit of geniality and fraternity—part at half-past nine, and at that salutary hour withdraw to recreating repose. Grand would be the result of such a system pursued for six months.

'Somehow I quite expect that you will let me see my "character," though you did not promise that you would. Do not keep it back on account of my faults; remember Thackeray seems to think our faults the best part of us. I will tell you faithfully whether it seems to me true or not.

'In a day or two I expect to be quite settled at home, and think I shall manage to be quite philosophic, &c. I was thankful to find my father very well; he said that when I wrote I was to give his best respects.'

Mr. Smith forwarded the 'character' immediately. It was a phrenological estimate by a certain Dr. Browne, whom Miss Brontë had visited at his Strand office; for in the early fifties phrenology was as fashionable an amusement as palmistry is to-day. The document, of which Mr. George Smith preserved a copy, ran as follows:—

'A PHRENOLOGICAL ESTIMATE OF THE TALENTS AND DISPOSITIONS OF A LADY.

'Temperament for the most part nervous. Brain large; the anterior and superior parts remarkably salient. In her domestic relations this lady will be warm and affectionate. In the care of children she will evince judicious kindness, but she is not pleased at seeing them spoiled by over-indulgence. Her fondness for any particular locality would chiefly rest upon the associations connected with it. Her attachments are strong and enduring; indeed, this is a leading element of her character. She is rather circumspect, however, in the choice of her friends, and it is well that she is so, for she will seldom meet with persons whose dispositions approach the standard of excellence with which she can entirely sympathise. Her sense of truth and justice would be offended by any dereliction of duty, and she would in such cases express her disapprobation with warmth and energy. She would not, however, be precipitate in acting thus, and rather than live in a state of hostility with those she could wish to love she would depart from them, although the breaking off of friendship would be to her a source of great unhappiness. The careless and unreflecting whom she would labour to amend might deem her punctilious and perhaps exacting, not considering that their amendment and not her own gratification prompted her to admonish. She is sensitive, and is very anxious to succeed in her undertakings, but is not so sanguine as to the probability of success. She is occasionally

inclined to take a gloomier view of things than perhaps the facts of the case justify. She should guard against the effect of this where her affection is engaged, for her sense of her own impatience is moderate and not strong enough to steel her against disappointment. She has more firmness than self-reliance, and her sense of justice is of a very high order. She is deferential to the aged and those she deems worthy of respect, and possesses much devotional feeling, but dislikes fanaticism, and is not given to a belief in supernatural things without questioning the probability of their existence.

'Money is not her idol; she values it merely for its uses. She would be liberal to the poor and compassionate to the afflicted, and when friendship calls for aid she would struggle even against her own interest to impart the required assistance; indeed, sympathy is a marked characteristic of this organisation.

'Is fond of symmetry and proportion, and possesses a good perception of form, and is a good judge of colour. She is endowed with a keen perception of melody and rhythm. Her imitative powers are good, and the faculty which gives small dexterity is well developed. These powers might have been cultivated with advantage. Is a fair calculator, and her sense of order and arrangement is remarkably good. Whatever this lady has to settle or arrange will be done with precision and taste.

'She is endowed with an exalted sense of the beautiful and ideal, and longs for perfection. If not a poet her sentiments are poetical, or at least imbued with that enthusiastic grace which is characteristic of poetical feeling. She is fond of dramatic literature and the drama, especially if it be combined with music.

'In its intellectual development this head is very remarkable. The forehead is at once very large and well formed. It bears the stamp of deep thoughtfulness and comprehensive understanding. It is highly philosophical. It exhibits the presence of an intellect at once perspicacious and perspicuous. There is much critical sagacity and fertility in devising resources in situations of difficulty; much originality, with a tendency to speculate and generalise. Possibly this speculative bias may sometimes interfere with the practical efficiency of some of her projects. Yet, since she has scarcely an adequate share of self-reliance, and is not sanguine as to the success of her plans, there is reason to suppose that she would attend more closely to particulars, and thereby prevent the unsatisfactory results of hasty generalisation. The lady possesses a fine organ of language, and can, if she has done her talents justice by exercise, express her sentiments with clearness, precision, and force—sufficiently eloquent but not verbose. In learning a language she would investigate its spirit and structure. The character of the German language would be well adapted to such an organisation. In analysing

'July 8, 1851.

'My dear Sir,—Thackeray's last lecture must, I think, have been his best. What he says about Sterne is true. His observations on literary men, and their social obligations and individual duties, seem to me also true and full of mental and moral vigour.[1] . . . The International Copyright Meet-

the motives of human conduct this lady would display originality and power, but in her mode of investigating mental science she would naturally be imbued with a metaphysical bias. She would perhaps be sceptical as to the truth of Gale's doctrine; but the study of this doctrine, this new system of mental philosophy, would give additional strength to her excellent understanding by rendering it more practical, more attentive to particulars, and contribute to her happiness by imparting to her more correct notions of the dispositions of those whose acquaintance she may wish to cultivate.

'J. P. Browne, M.D.

'367 Strand:
'June 29, 1851.'

Mr. George Smith would seem to have accompanied Miss Brontë to the phrenologist under the pseudonym and disguise of 'Mr. Fraser.' He must have sent Miss Brontë his own 'character' as well as hers, for in a letter dated July 2, 1851, she says—

'I send back Mr. Fraser's character by return of post; but I have found time to take a careful and exact copy of the same, which (D.V.) I mean to keep always. I wanted a portrait, and have now got one very much to my mind. With the exception of that slight mistake between number and music, and the small vein of error which flows thence through the character, it is a sort of miracle—*like—like—like* as the very life itself. Destroy Mr. Ford's lithograph. Transfer to fair type Dr. Browne's sketch, and frame and glaze it instead. I am glad I have got it. I wanted it. Yet if you really object to my keeping this copy tell me to burn it, and I will burn it; but I should *like* to keep it, and will show it to nobody.'

[1] The letter is to Mr. George Smith: the omitted sentence runs as follows:—

'But I regret that a lecture, in other respects so worthy of his best self, should not take a more masterly, a juster view of the old question of authors and booksellers. Why did he not *speak* as—I know—he *thinks* on this subject? Why, in treating it, did he talk all the worn-out cant now grown stale and commonplace? I feel sure Mr. Thackeray does not quite respect himself when he runs on in that trite vein of

ing seems to have had but a barren result, judging from the report in the "Literary Gazette." I cannot see that Sir E. Bulwer and the rest *did* anything; nor can I well see what it is in their power to do. The argument brought forward about the damage accruing to American national literature from the present piratical system is a good and sound argument; but I am afraid the publishers—honest men—are not yet mentally prepared to give such reasoning due weight. I should think that which refers to the injury inflicted upon themselves, by an oppressive competition in piracy, would influence them more; but I suppose all established matters, be they good or evil, are difficult to change. About the "Phrenological Character" [1] I must not say a word. Of your own accord you have found the safest point from which to view it; I will not say "look higher"! I think you see the matter as it is desirable we should all see what relates to ourselves. If I had a right to whisper a word of counsel, it should be merely this: whatever your present self may be, resolve with all your strength of resolution never to degenerate thence. Be jealous of a shadow of falling off. Determine rather to look above that standard, and to strive beyond it. Everybody appreciates certain social properties, and likes his neighbour for possessing them; but perhaps few dwell upon a friend's capacity for the intellectual, or care how this might expand, if there were but facilities allowed for cultivation, and space given for growth. It seems to me that, even should such space and facilities be denied by stringent circumstances

abuse. He does not think all he says. He knows better than from his inmost heart and genuine convictions sweepingly to condemn a whole class. There may be radical evils in the *system*, meeting and courting attack, but it is time to have done with indefinable clamour against the *men*, and to cease indiscriminate aspersions which sound outrageous but mean little. Ere long Messrs. Bungay and Bacon will be converted into true martyrs and very interesting characters, so innocent and so wronged that in spite of oneself one will feel obliged to pity and vindicate them.'

[1] 'About Mr. Fraser's character' are the words in the original letter—*i.e.* Mr. Smith's 'character,' as told by Dr. Browne, the phrenologist.

and a rigid fate, still it should do you good fully to know, and tenaciously to remember, that you have such a capacity. When other people overwhelm you with acquired knowledge, such as you have not had opportunity, perhaps not application, to gain—derive not pride but support from the thought. If no new books had ever been written, some of these minds would themselves have remained blank pages: they only take an impression; they were not born with a record of thought on the brain, or an instinct of sensation on the heart. If I had never seen a printed volume, Nature would have offered my perceptions a varying picture of a continuous narrative, which, without any other teacher than herself, would have schooled me to knowledge, unsophisticated but genuine.[1]

'Before I received your last I had made up my mind to tell you that I should expect no letter for three months to come (intending afterwards to extend this abstinence to six months, for I am jealous of becoming dependent on this indulgence: you doubtless cannot see why because you do not live my life). Nor shall I now expect a letter; but since you say that you would like to write now and then, I cannot say "never write" without imposing on my real wishes a falsehood which they reject, and doing to them a violence to which they entirely refuse to submit. I can only observe that when it pleases you to write, whether seriously or for a little amusement, your notes, if they come to me, will come where they are welcome. Tell —— I will try to cultivate good spirits as assiduously as she cultivates her geraniums.'

[1] The letter continues here, referring of course to Miss Brontë's own phrenological character, 'About the "lady's" character I have nothing to say—not a word. For the use made of it I can quite trust you, and shall neither give directions nor impose restrictions. Show it to Mr. Williams if you like, but tell him with my best regards on no account when he reads to think of Queen Elizabeth's portraits. If there be a lack of shadow, he is to be so good as not to draw attention to that fact, but kindly to supply the deficiency out of his own artistic mind. You may add that he need not be afraid to introduce the same (*i.e.* the shadow) in good broad masses, the "lady" undertaking to acknowledge any defect of a not unreasonably heinous dye.'

CHAPTER XXIV

Soon after she returned home her friend paid her a visit. While she stayed at Haworth Miss Brontë wrote the letter from which the following extract is taken. The strong sense and right feeling displayed in it on the subject of friendship sufficiently account for the constancy of affection which Miss Brontë earned from all those who once became her friends:—

TO W. S. WILLIAMS, ESQ.

'July 21, 1851.

'. . . I could not help wondering whether Cornhill will ever change for me, as Oxford has changed for you. I have some pleasant associations connected with it now; will these alter their character some day?

'Perhaps they may, though I have faith to the contrary, because, I *think*, I do not exaggerate my partialities; I *think* I take faults along with excellences—blemishes together with beauties. And besides, in the matter of friendship, I have observed that disappointment here arises chiefly, *not* from liking our friends too well, or thinking of them too highly, but rather from an over-estimate of *their* liking for and opinion of *us*; and that if we guard ourselves with sufficient scrupulousness of care from error in this direction, and can be content, and even happy, to give more affection than we receive—can make just comparison of circumstances, and be severely accurate in drawing inferences thence, and never let self-love blind our eyes—I think we may manage to get through life with consistency and constancy, unembittered by that misanthropy which springs from revul-

sions of feeling. All this sounds a little metaphysical, but it is good sense if you consider it. The moral of it is that, if we would build on a sure foundation in friendship, we must love our friends for *their* sakes rather than for *our own*; we must look at their truth to *themselves* full as much as their truth to *us*. In the latter case every wound to self-love would be a cause of coldness; in the former only some painful change in the friend's character and disposition—some fearful breach in his allegiance to his better self—could alienate the heart.

'How interesting your old maiden cousin's gossip about your parents must have been to you; and how gratifying to find that the reminiscence turned on none but pleasant facts and characteristics! Life must, indeed be slow in that little decaying hamlet amongst the chalk hills. After all, depend upon it, it is better to be worn out with work in a thronged community than to perish of inaction in a stagnant solitude: take this truth into consideration whenever you get tired of work and bustle.'[1]

[1] There is a letter to Mr. George Smith dated July 31, 1851:—

'As I sent a note of Miss Martineau's with a critique of Thackeray's last lecture in it, so I cannot help sending one just received from Mrs. Gaskell, that you may compare the temper and judgment of the two ladies. This letter has nothing of personal interest to yourself, nothing about "my Publishers" (I only wish it had); still I think you will like to read opinions so justly conceived and pleasantly expressed; it will be a little variety on your usual business correspondence.

'I wrote to Miss Martineau immediately on the receipt of yours, communicating the full assurance you gave of your willingness to publish an anonymous work from her pen, and quoting your own expression as to the best method of preserving secrecy. I wish she may try this experiment, but as far as the mystery goes I apprehend she will betray herself. I have conjured her to trust no more confidants, but I fear she will not stop at me. Should I hear from her again on the subject, I will let you know.

'I have marked with red ink where you are to begin Mrs. G.'s note; one dare not again put an index hand, you are too sarcastic.'

There is another letter, dated August 4:—

'I send Miss Martineau's letter received this morning, and written

I received a letter from her a little later than this; and though there is reference throughout to what I must have said in writing to her, all that it called forth in reply is so peculiarly characteristic that I cannot prevail upon myself to pass it over without a few extracts:—

'Haworth: August 6, 1851.

'My dear Mrs. Gaskell,—I was too much pleased with for your perusal. You will see her spirit is up, and I hope and believe she will do work worthy of her. She has her faults, but she has, too, a fine mind and noble powers. She can never be so charming a woman as Mrs. Gaskell, but she is a greater writer. I even begin to believe her emulation may be so wrought upon as to induce her to keep the secret. You see you will have to write to her. Her present address is West Cliff House, Norfolk.

'Surely you do not intend to let this summer pass without giving yourself a holiday. I can only say that such over-devotion to business would be wrong—suicidal—it would merit punishment more than the sly peccadilloes of the erring Calcutta bookseller. Remember you cannot do without health; it is your best ally in every undertaking.

'Just permit me to say this: When you form resolutions about reading beware of over-tasking. Too exacting a determination alarms and impedes endeavour. Sometimes when the necessity of reading some dry and very solid book has lain heavy on my conscience, I have found that by setting myself to study it only for an hour (or perhaps in your case half an hour) each day, the last page has been reached far sooner than one could have anticipated, and one remembers it well too, read in this deliberate way.

'Do I give diminutive doses of medicine in large comfits? I thought I retrenched the sugar with a very austere hand: I always intend to do so.

'I am in much better health than when I was in London, during which time frequent headaches harassed me a good deal. I am not, however, on good terms with myself, and have no cause to be so. My pleasantest thoughts lie in the hope that Mr. Thackeray and Miss Martineau will each write a good book, and that you, they, and the public will find therein mutual benefit and satisfaction.

'You had almost got another hostile manual demonstration, but on the whole I think it is better to let you alone; the blows you inflict are much more telling than those you receive. I see plainly Nature made you a critic, while Fate perversely transformed you into a publisher—in her rage against authors.'

your letter, when I got it at last, to feel disposed to murmur now about the delay.

'About a fortnight ago I received a letter from Miss Martineau: a long letter, and treating precisely the same subjects on which yours dwelt, viz. the Exhibition and Thackeray's last lecture. It was interesting mentally to place the two documents side by side—to study the two aspects of mind—to view alternately the same scene through two mediums. Full striking was the difference; and the more striking because it was not the rough contrast of good and evil, but the more subtle opposition, the more delicate diversity of different kinds of good. The excellences of one nature resembled (I thought) that of some sovereign medicine—harsh, perhaps, to the taste, but potent to invigorate; the good of the other seemed more akin to the nourishing efficacy of our daily bread. It is not bitter; it is not lusciously sweet; it pleases without flattering the palate; it sustains without forcing the strength.

'I very much agree with you in all you say. For the sake of variety I could almost wish that the concord of opinion were less complete.

'To begin with Trafalgar Square. My taste goes with yours and Meta's completely on this point. I have always thought it a fine site (and *sight* also). The view from the summit of those steps has ever struck me as grand and imposing—Nelson Column included: the fountains I could dispense with. With respect, also, to the Crystal Palace, my thoughts are precisely yours.

'Then I feel sure you speak justly of Thackeray's lecture. You do well to set aside odious comparisons, and to wax impatient of that trite twaddle about "nothing-newness"—a jargon which simply proves, in those who habitually use it, a coarse and feeble faculty of appreciation; an inability to discern the relative value of *originality* and *novelty*; a lack of that refined perception which, dispensing with the stimulus of an ever new subject, can derive sufficiency of pleasure from freshness of treatment. To such critics the prime of a

summer morning would bring no delight; wholly occupied with railing at their cook for not having provided a novel and piquant breakfast dish, they would remain insensible to such influences as lie in sunrise, dew, and breeze: therein would be "nothing new."

'Is it Mr. ——'s family experience which has influenced your feelings about the Catholics? I own I cannot be sorry for this commencing change. Good people—*very* good people—I doubt not, there are amongst the Romanists, but the system is not one which should have such sympathy as *yours*. Look at Popery taking off the mask in Naples!

'I have read "The Saint's Tragedy."[1] As a "work of art" it seems to me far superior to either "Alton Locke" or "Yeast." Faulty it may be, crude and unequal, yet there are portions where some of the deep chords of human nature are swept with a hand which is strong even while it falters. We see throughout (I *think*) that Elizabeth has not, and never had, a mind perfectly sane. From the time that she was what she herself, in the exaggeration of her humility, calls "an idiot girl," to the hour when she lay moaning in visions on her dying bed, a slight craze runs through her whole existence. This is good: this is true. A sound mind, a healthy intellect, would have dashed the priest power to the wall; would have defended her natural affections from his grasp, as a lioness defends her young; would have been as true to husband and children as your leal-hearted little Maggie was to her Frank. Only a mind weak with some fatal flaw *could* have been influenced as was this poor saint's. But what anguish—what struggles! Seldom do I cry over books, but here my eyes rained as I read. When Elizabeth turns her face to the wall—I stopped—there needed no more.

'Deep truths are touched on in this tragedy—touched on, not fully elicited—truths that stir a peculiar pity, a compassion hot with wrath and bitter with pain. This is no

[1] *The Saint's Tragedy; or, the True Story of Elizabeth of Hungary*, by Charles Kingsley, was published in 1848.

poet's dream: we know that such things *have* been done; that minds *have* been thus subjected, and lives thus laid waste.

'Remember me kindly and respectfully to Mr. Gaskell, and though I have not seen Marianne I must beg to include her in the love I send the others. Could you manage to convey a small kiss to that dear but dangerous little person Julia? She surreptitiously possessed herself of a minute fraction of my heart, which has been missing ever since I saw her. Believe me sincerely and affectionately yours,

C. BRONTË.'

The reference which she makes at the end of this letter is to my youngest little girl, between whom and her a strong mutual attraction existed. The child would steal her little hand into Miss Brontë's scarcely larger one, and each took pleasure in this apparently unobserved caress. Yet once, when I told Julia to take and show her the way to some room in the house, Miss Brontë shrank back: 'Do not *bid* her do anything for me,' she said; 'it has been so sweet hitherto to have her rendering her little kindnesses *spontaneously*.'

As illustrating her feelings with regard to children, I may give what she says in another of her letters to me.

'Whenever I see Florence and Julia again I shall feel like a fond but bashful suitor, who views at a distance the fair personage to whom, in his clownish awe, he dare not risk a near approach. Such is the clearest idea I can give you of my feeling towards children I like, but to whom I am a stranger. And to what children am I not a stranger? They seem to me little wonders; their talk, their ways are all matter of half admiring, half puzzled speculation.' [1]

[1] On August 9 she writes to Mr. George Smith—

'Enclosed is a letter from Miss Martineau to you. I think you will like its clearness and candour, and you will see that though she considers her own interest on the subject of terms, yet she brings to the discussion

The following is part of a long letter which I received from her, dated September 20, 1851:—

'. . . Beautiful are those sentences out of James Martineau's sermons; some of them gems most pure and genuine; ideas deeply conceived, finely expressed. I should

of that question none of the worldly, bargaining spirit by which I fear some minds of otherwise first-rate calibre are apt to lower their business transactions.

'In reference to what she says about myself, I need hardly add that it will give me the greatest pleasure to be useful to either you or her in this matter; but it is well you do not acknowledge the "favour I have conferred in introducing you to Miss M." I hereby wash my hands of that charge. It was not I who did it. Fate managed the whole business, and, you see, she has known your firm of old. I trust, with you, that there is no fear of her touching on religious subjects; "a burnt child dreads the fire," and though she is too stoical to cry out I cannot doubt that she has been well scorched of late.

'You must not be *too* sanguine about the book; for though it seems to me there are grounds for anticipating that she will produce something superior to what she has yet written in the same class, yet perhaps the nature and bent of her genius hardly warrant the expectation of first-rate excellence in fiction. She seems to be suffering from some sense of constraint from the idea of continued obligations to keep the secret; perhaps when you write to her again it may be as well to mention your own ideas on this point. I mean to say, how far do you think it desirable and important? Secret-keeping does not agree with her at all. I cannot help smiling at the kind of little bustle she makes about it.

'I return the copy of your letter to Miss M. Orthography blameless. Composition well turned.

'It was kind of you to write that last letter; I could hardly believe when I opened it that it was *all* for me. The "medicine," by the by, was accepted with a grace beyond all praise, and now, perhaps, I may venture to confess that after I had written that P.S. and sent the letter off some severe qualms came over me as to whether I had not taken a small liberty. "It is true," I argued with myself, "Mr. Fraser has been pronounced on authority to be without a "tincture of arrogance in his nature," but then, again, the same oracle describes him as "very sensitive;" it says, "His feelings are easily wounded," and though, for my consolation, it adds, "He is of a forgiving temper," yet every sensible person knows that this is a quality which ought never to be trifled with or tried too far. However "all's well that ends well." Mr. Fraser

like much to see his review of his sister's book. Of all the articles respecting which you question me I have seen none, except that notable one in the "Westminster" on the Emancipation of Women. But why are you and I to think (perhaps I should rather say to *feel*) so exactly alike on some points that there can be no discussion between us? Your words on this paper express my thoughts. Well argued it is—clear, logical—but vast is the hiatus of omission; harsh the consequent jar on every finer chord of the soul. What is this hiatus? I think I know; and knowing, I will venture to say. I think the writer forgets there is such a thing as self-sacrificing love and disinterested devotion. . . . I believe J. S. Mill would make a hard, dry, dismal world of it; and yet he speaks admirable sense through a great portion of his article, especially when he says that if there be a natural unfitness in women for men's employment there is no need to make laws on the subject; leave all careers open; let them try; those who ought to succeed will succeed, or, at least, will have a fair chance; the incapable will fall back into their right place. He likewise disposes of the "maternity" question very neatly. . . . You are right when you say that there is a large margin in

kindly understood me, for which I beg to tell him I am grateful; it is pleasant to be understood.

'The incident at the Guild Performance amused me; it was one of those occasions which, while startling people out of their customary smooth bearing, elicit genuine touches of character. Mr. Fraser and the panic-struck young lady both revealed themselves according to their different natures. It is easy to realise the scene.

'You sent about a fortnight since a volume of *London Labour*, &c. (a curiously interesting book to read); to-day you have sent Mr. Ruskin's pamphlet. What can one say?

'I hope your mother and sisters and Alick are all enjoying themselves by the seaside this fine weather; doubtless they wish that you shared their enjoyment, but it seems as if the circle of happiness were rarely to be complete in this world; however, as long as you have good health, cheerful spirits, as long too as your operations are animated and rewarded by reasonable success, there will be abundant cause for satisfaction to those and all who wish you well.'

human nature over which the logicians have no dominion; glad am I that it is so.[1]

'I send by this post Ruskin's "Stones of Venice," and I hope you and Meta will find passages in it that will please you. Some parts would be dry and technical were it not for the character, the marked individuality, which pervades every page. I wish Marianne had come to speak to me at the lecture; it would have given me such pleasure. What you say of that small sprite Julia amuses me very much. I believe you don't know that she has a great deal of her mamma's nature (modified) in her, yet I think you will find she has as she grows up.

'Will it not be a great mistake if Mr. Thackeray should deliver his lectures at Manchester under such circumstances and conditions as will exclude people like you and Mr. Gaskell from the number of his audience? I thought his London plan too narrow. Charles Dickens would not thus limit his sphere of action.

'You charge me to write about myself. What can I say on that precious topic? My health is pretty good. My spirits are not always alike. Nothing happens to me. I hope and expect little in this world, and am thankful that I do not despond and suffer more. Thank you for inquiring after our old servant; she is pretty well; the little shawl, &c., pleased her much. Papa likewise, I am glad to say, is pretty well; with his and my kindest regards to you and Mr. Gaskell, believe me sincerely and affectionately yours,

'C. Brontë.'

[1] Mr. J. S. Mill, in a letter upon this passage, says, 'I am not the author of the article. I may claim to be its editor; and I should be proud to be identified with every thought, every sentiment, and every expression in it. The writer is a woman, and the most warm-hearted woman, of the largest and most genial sympathies, and the most forgetful of self in her generous zeal to do honour to others, whom I have ever known' * (*Note by Mrs. Gaskell*).

* John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) married in 1851 Mrs. John Taylor, the writer of the article referred to.

Before the autumn was far advanced the usual effects of her solitary life, and of the unhealthy situation of Haworth Parsonage, began to appear in the form of sick headaches and miserable, starting, wakeful nights. She does not dwell on this in her letters; but there is an absence of all cheerfulness of tone, and an occasional sentence forced out of her, which imply far more than many words could say. There was illness all through the Parsonage household—taking its accustomed forms of lingering influenza and low fever; she herself was outwardly the strongest of the family, and all domestic exertion fell for a time upon her shoulders.[1]

[1] There is a letter to Mr. George Smith dated September 8, 1851:—

'I must summon courage to write a line; besides the vision of Mr. Thackeray rising up, grand, with the laurel of Tasso about his brows, would rouse one out of a dead trance. Has he seen himself in this stately Italian garb, and does he like it?

'Under the circumstances it is rather a singular coincidence that the same number of the *Rivista Britannica* should contain a translation of one of Miss Martineau's tales, "The Feats of the Fiords." Enrichetta Martineau and Guglielmo Thackeray seem unconsciously matched against each other.

'I see from the *Leader* it is now generally known that Mr. Thackeray is at work on a new novel. It was wise of him to leave England to write it: I do hope it will prove a masterpiece.

'The "John Drayton" paragraph is a manœuvre worthy of the publisher of the *Baroness von Beck's Memoirs*. The book, it appears, is announced in conspicuous type as if it were to be something special. From the title I am inclined to expect an imitation of *Mary Barton*; it sounds as if it were intended to belong to that school; but one ought not to judge from a title. I leave in your hands the treatment of all false rumours in which Currer Bell is concerned. Currer Bell has one publisher, and that is not Mr. Bentley nor Mr. Colburn.

'I ought not to forget, and indeed have not forgotten, that your last propounds to this same Currer Bell a question about a "serial." My dear Sir, give Currer Bell the experience of a Thackeray or the animal spirit of a Dickens, and then repeat the question. Even *then* he would answer, "I will publish no serial of which the last number is not written before the first comes out." At present he would merely say that it is not worth your while to think of him.

'I am glad you like the early rising on cold water system as prescribed by Miss Martineau. You must be sure and try it, first on yourself, and

TO W. S. WILLIAMS, ESQ.

'September 26.

'As I laid down your letter, after reading with interest the graphic account it gives of a very striking scene, I could then you must coax Mr. Thackeray as one of the "authors with whom you have influence" to adopt it. Nothing can be better suited to the "Portly Classes," like the "Trade;" nor, perhaps, to the Anakim of Intellect, such as Miss Martineau and Mr. Thackeray. But never mind the small fry, the wretched, thin, undersized scribblers; that winter morning walk by frosty starlight, that ice-cold bath and three tumblers of cold water would extinguish us altogether; and "Small loss," you would remark. Well, I incline to think so too.'

There is a further letter to Mr. Smith dated September 22, 1851 :—

'I am sure I am not low-spirited just now, but very happy, and in this mood I will write to you.

'That enclosed copy of a letter (ought I to return it?) gave me great pleasure; it is comforting to be useful; it is pleasant to see a sprouting greenness where seed has been sown. I doubt not my well-intentioned preface remarks have ere this brought on you and Mr. Williams the annoyance of accumulated rubbish, and it would be hard indeed if amongst all the chaff should not now and then occur a few grains of wheat. I trust this may be the case in the present instance; I wish that from these grains may spring a promising crop.

'Can I help wishing you well when I owe you directly or indirectly most of the good moments I now enjoy? Or can I avoid feeling grieved—mortified—when the chance of aiding to give effect to my own wishes offers itself and, for want of strength, vitality, animal spirits, I know not what in me, passes by unimproved? Oh, that serial! It is of no use telling you what a storm in a teacup the mention of it stirred in Currer Bell's mind, what a fight he had with himself about it. You do not know, you *cannot* know, how strongly his nature inclines him to adopt suggestions coming from so friendly a quarter; how he would like to take them up, cherish them, give them form, conduct them to a successful issue; and how sorrowfully he turns away, feeling in his inmost heart that this work, this pleasure is not for him.

'But though Currer Bell cannot do this you are still to think him your friend, and you are still to be *his* friend. You are to keep a fraction of yourself—if it be only the end of your little finger—for *him*, and that fraction he will neither let gentleman or lady, author or artist, not even Miss McCrowdie (the Scotch gentlewoman whose portrait you so graphically depict), take possession of, or so much as meddle with. He reduces his claim to a minute point, and that point he monopolises.

not help feeling with renewed force a truth, trite enough, yet ever impressive, viz. that it is good to be attracted out of ourselves, to be forced to take a near view of the sufferings, the privations, the efforts, the difficulties of others. If we ourselves live in fulness of content, it is well to be reminded that thousands of our fellow creatures undergo a different lot; it is well to have sleepy sympathies excited, and lethargic selfishness shaken up. If, on the other hand, we be contending with the special grief—the intimate trial—the peculiar bitterness with which God has seen fit to mingle our own cup of existence, it is very good to know that our overcast lot is not singular; it stills the repining word and thought—it rouses the flagging strength, to have it vividly set before us that there are countless afflictions in the world, each perhaps rivalling—some surpassing—the private pain over which we are too prone exclusively to sorrow.

'All those crowded emigrants had their troubles—their untoward causes of banishment; you, the looker-on, had "your wishes and regrets"—your anxieties, alloying your

'I won't say I don't rather like Miss Girzy McCrowdie. I believe one might get on with her pretty well. After all, depend on it, there would be a rude sort of worth in her.

'What is it you say about my breaking the interval between this and Christmas by going from home for a week? No; if there were no other objection (and there are many) there is the pain of that last bidding good-bye, that hopeless shaking hands, yet undulled and unforgotten. I don't like it. I could not bear its frequent repetition. Do not recur to this plan. Going to London is a mere palliation and stimulant: reaction follows.

'Meantime I really do get on very well; not always alike, and I have been at intervals despondent; but Providence is kind, and hitherto whenever depression passes a certain point some incident transpires to turn the current, to lighten the load; a cheering sunrise so far ever followed a night of peculiar vigil and fear. Hope, indeed, is not a plant to flourish very luxuriantly in this northern climate, but still it throws out fresh leaves and a blossom now and then, proving that it is far from dead; and as for Fortitude, Miss McCrowdie herself will tell you what tenacious roots that shrub twines in a stony, moorish soil.'

home happiness and domestic bliss ; and the parallel might be pursued further, and still it would be true—still the same ; a thorn in the flesh for each ; some burden, some conflict for all.

'How far this state of things is susceptible of amelioration from changes in public institutions—alterations in national habits—may and ought to be earnestly considered : but this is a problem not easily solved. The evils, as you point them out, are great, real, and most obvious : the remedy is obscure and vague ; yet for such difficulties as spring from over-competition emigration must be good ; the new life in a new country must give a new lease of hope ; the wider field, less thickly peopled, must open a new path for endeavour. But I always think great physical powers of exertion and endurance ought to accompany such a step. . . I am truly glad to hear that an *original* writer has fallen in your way. Originality is the pearl of great price in literature—the rarest, the most precious claim by which an author can be recommended. Are not your publishing prospects for the coming season tolerably rich and satisfactory ? You inquire after "Currer Bell." It seems to me that the absence of his name from your list of announcements will leave no blank, and that he may at least spare himself the disquietude of thinking he is wanted when it is certainly not his lot to appear.

'Perhaps Currer Bell has his secret moan about these matters ; but if so he will keep it to himself. It is an affair about which no words need be wasted, for no words can make a change : it is between him and his position, his faculties and his fate.'

My husband and I were anxious that she should pay us a visit before the winter had set completely in ; and she thus wrote, declining our invitation :—

'November 6.

'If anybody would tempt me from home you would ; but, just now, from home I must not, will not go. I feel greatly better at present than I did three weeks ago. For a

month or six weeks about the equinox (autumnal or vernal) is a period of the year which, I have noticed, strangely tries me. Sometimes the strain falls on the mental, sometimes on the physical part of me ; I am ill with neuralgic headache, or I am ground to the dust with deep dejection of spirits (not, however, such dejection but I can keep to myself). That weary time has, I think and trust, got over for this year. It was the anniversary of my poor brother's death, and of my sister's failing health : I need say no more.

'As to running away from home every time I have a battle of this sort to fight, it would not do : besides the "weird" would follow. As to shaking it off, that cannot be. I have declined to go to Mrs. ——, to Miss Martineau, and now I decline to go to you. But listen ! do not think that I throw your kindness away, or that it fails of doing the good you desire. On the contrary, the feeling expressed in your letter—proved by your invitation—goes *right home* where you would have it to go, and heals as you would have it to heal.

'Your description of Frederika Bremer[1] tallies exactly with one I read somewhere, in I know not what book. I laughed out when I got to the mention of Frederika's special accomplishment, given by you with a distinct simplicity that, to my taste, is what the French would call "impayable." Where do you find the foreigner who is without some little drawback of this description ? It is a pity.'[2]

[1] Frederika Bremer (1801–65), a Swedish novelist, whose works Mary Howitt translated into English.

[2] Miss Brontë writes to Mr. George Smith on November 7, 1851, a letter in which there are blanks arising from the original being torn :—

'I enclose a note just received from Miss Martineau. She wishes to put the name "Edward Howard" on the title-page of her book. Is there any objection ? I told her I could see none. I fear she is a good deal disappointed that I cannot go to see her this winter and talk the work over, as I half promised, but the fact is several people have asked me to pay them visits ; it is almost impossible to select without giving offence, and if I went at all I should be continually rambling about and never at home with my father, which would not do. Besides, I should

unsettled as not to have the chance of doing any work

A visit from Miss Wooler at this period did Miss Brontë much good for the time. She speaks of her guest's company as being 'very pleasant,' 'like good wine,' both to her father and to herself. But Miss Wooler could not remain with her long; and then again the monotony of her life returned upon her in all its force, the only events of her days and weeks consisting in the small changes which occasional letters brought. It must be remembered that her health was often such as to prevent her stirring out of the house in inclement or wintry weather. She was liable to sore throat, and depressing pain at the chest, and difficulty of breathing, on the least exposure to cold.

A letter from her late visitor touched and gratified her much; it was simply expressive of gratitude for attention and kindness shown to her, but it wound up by saying that she had not for many years experienced so much enjoyment as during the ten days passed at Haworth. This little sentence called out a wholesome sensation of modest pleasure in Miss Brontë's mind; and she says, 'it did me good.'

I find, in a letter to a distant friend,[1] written about this time, a retrospect of her visit to London. It is too ample to be considered as a mere repetition of what she had said before; and, besides, it shows that her first impressions of what she saw and heard were not crude and transitory, but stood the tests of time and afterthought.

'I spent a few weeks in town last summer, as you have

of my may be a dreary thought, a blank , but I must absolutely get accustomed to a life of solitude; there is no other plan.

'The enclosure in your last puzzled me a little at first, being of a larger amount than I expected; but I remember now you said something at Richmond about having some money for me. I wanted to know how that happened, and what it came from, feeling a little sceptical. You did not tell me. I did not like to ask you twice. If, however, you had any cash that was *justly* mine, you did right to put it in the Funds with the rest.'

[1] To James Taylor in Bombay.

heard, and was much interested by many things I heard and saw there. What now chiefly dwells in my memory are Mr. Thackeray's lectures, Mademoiselle Rachel's acting, D'Aubigné's, Melville's, and Maurice's preaching, and the Crystal Palace.

'Mr. Thackeray's lectures you will have seen mentioned and commented on in the papers; they were very interesting. I could not always coincide with the sentiments expressed, or the opinions broached; but I admired the gentlemanlike ease, the quiet humour, the taste, the talent, the simplicity, and the originality of the lecturer.

'Rachel's acting transfixed me with wonder, enchained me with interest, and thrilled me with horror. The tremendous force with which she expresses the very worst passions in their strongest essence forms an exhibition as exciting as the bull-fights of Spain and the gladiatorial combats of old Rome, and (it seemed to me) not one whit more moral than these poisoned stimulants to popular ferocity. It is scarcely human nature that she shows you; it is something wilder and worse; the feelings and fury of a fiend. The great gift of genius she undoubtedly has; but, I fear, she rather abuses it than turns it to good account.

'With all the three preachers I was greatly pleased. Melville seemed to me the most eloquent, Maurice the most in earnest; had I the choice, it is Maurice whose ministry I should frequent.

'On the Crystal Palace I need not comment. You must already have heard too much of it. It struck me at the first with only a vague sort of wonder and admiration; but having one day the privilege of going over it in company with an eminent countryman of yours, Sir David Brewster, and hearing, in his friendly Scotch accent, his lucid explanation of many things that have been to me before a sealed book, I began a little better to comprehend it, or at least a small part of it; whether its final results will equal expectation I know not.'

Her increasing indisposition subdued her at last, in spite of all her efforts of reason and will. She tried to forget oppressive recollections in writing. Her publishers were importunate for a new book from her pen. 'Villette' was begun, but she lacked power to continue it.

'It is not at all likely,' she says, 'that my book will be ready at the time you mention. If my health is spared I shall get on with it as fast as is consistent with its being done, if not *well*, yet as well as I can do it—*not one whit faster*. When the mood leaves me (it has left me now, without vouchsafing so much as a word of a message when it will return) I put by the MS. and wait till it comes back again. God knows I sometimes have to wait long—*very* long it seems to me. Meantime, if I might make a request to you, it would be this: Please to say nothing about my book till it is written and in your hands. You may not like it. I am not myself elated with it as far as it has gone, and authors, you need not be told, are always tenderly indulgent, even blindly partial, to their own. Even if it should turn out reasonably well, still I regard it as ruin to the prosperity of an ephemeral book, like a novel, to be much talked of beforehand, as if it were something great. People are apt to conceive, or at least to profess, exaggerated expectation, such as no performance can realise; then ensue disappointment and the due revenge, detraction and failure. If when I write I were to think of the critics who, I know, are waiting for Currer Bell, ready "to break all his bones or ever he comes to the bottom of the den," my hand would fall paralysed on my desk. However I can but do my best, and then muffle my head in the mantle of Patience, and sit down at her feet and wait.'

The mood here spoken of did not go off; it had a physical origin. Indigestion, nausea, headache, sleeplessness all combined to produce miserable depression of spirits. A little event which occurred about this time did not tend to cheer her. It was the death of poor old faithful Keeper,

Emily's dog. He had come to the Parsonage in the fierce strength of his youth. Sullen and ferocious, he had met with his master in the indomitable Emily. Like most dogs of his kind he feared, respected, and deeply loved her who subdued him. He had mourned her with the pathetic fidelity of his nature, falling into old age after her death. And now her surviving sister wrote, 'Poor old Keeper died last Monday morning, after being ill one night; he went gently to sleep; we laid his old faithful head in the garden. Flossy (the "fat curly-haired dog") is dull and misses him. There was something very sad in losing the old dog; yet I am glad he met a natural fate. People kept hinting he ought to be put away, which neither papa nor I liked to think of.' [1]

When Miss Brontë wrote this, on December 8, she was suffering from a bad cold, and pain in her side. Her illness increased, and on December 17 she—so patient, silent,

[1] A Mr. John Stores Smith visited Haworth in 1850, called upon Miss Brontë, and described his experiences in the *Free Lance* of March 14, 1868. His article contains the best description of Keeper that I have seen :—

'In those days I possessed a dog, which had become a loved companion of my rambles. This dog arrived at the garden wicket simultaneously with myself. Now it so chanced that the dog of the parsonage was taking his siesta in the sun at that very moment, and lay curled into a huge ball on the doorstep. He was very old, almost toothless, and I believe wholly blind. His breed was conglomerate, combining every species of English caninity from the turnspit to the sheepdog, with a strain of Haworth originality superadded. . . . In the exuberance of his youth, with tail wagging and ears cocked, my dog trotted gaily up to this poor old memento of the past, and in a second there was such an uproar as Haworth churchyard had seldom or never heard. With an angry roar the old dog by sheer weight rolled the younger one over, and commenced a painless worrying with his toothless gums; and the other, smarting under the first rebuff he had yet encountered, howled from vexation rather than from pain. In a minute or less I had nipped up my animal and held him under my arm, barking furiously, while the old one rolled to and fro among the mandrakes, blindly seeking his vanished enemy. At this instant the door opened and the servant appeared, and behind her on the stairs the authoress of *Jane Eyre*.'

and enduring of suffering—so afraid of any selfish taxing of others—had to call to her friend Ellen for help.

'I cannot at present go to see you, but I would be grateful if you could come and see me, even were it only for a few days. To speak truth, I have put on but a poor time of it during this month past. I kept hoping to be better, but was at last obliged to have recourse to a medical man. Sometimes I have felt very weak and low, and long much for society, but could not persuade myself to commit the selfish act of asking you merely for my own relief. The doctor speaks encouragingly, but as yet I get no better. As the illness has been coming on for a long time, it cannot, I suppose, be expected to disappear all at once. I am not confined to bed, but I am weak—have had no appetite for about three weeks—and my nights are very bad. I am well aware myself that extreme and continuous depression of spirits has had much to do with the origin of the illness; and I know a little cheerful society would do me more good than gallons of medicine. If you *can* come, come on Friday. Write to-morrow and say whether this be possible, and what time you will be at Keighley, that I may send the gig. I do not ask you to stay long; a few days is all I request.'

Of course her friend went; and a certain amount of benefit was derived from her society, always so grateful to Miss Brontë. But the evil was now too deep-rooted to be more than palliated for a time by 'the little cheerful society' for which she so touchingly besought.

A relapse came on before long. She was very ill, and the remedies employed took an unusual effect on her peculiar sensitiveness of constitution. Mr. Brontë was miserably anxious about the state of his only remaining child, for she was reduced to the last degree of weakness, as she had been unable to swallow food for above a week before. She rallied, and derived her sole sustenance from half a tea-cup of liquid, administered by teaspoonfuls, in the course of

the day. Yet she kept out of bed, for her father's sake, and struggled in solitary patience through her worst hours.[1]

[1] On November 10 she wrote to Mr. Williams the following hitherto unpublished letter:—

'I have now read *The Fair Carew*. It seems to me a delightful work and of genuine metal. Whether it has the glare and strong excitement necessary to attract the million I do not know, but I find in it the ease and repose only seen in good books. It owns both breadth of outline and delicacy of finish, sufficient force, and the most facile flow. The truth and nature of the characters are beyond praise; the satire has a keen edge, yet the temper of the work is good and genial. This writer is as shrewd as Miss Austen and not so shrewish, as interesting as Mrs. Inchbald and more vigorous. Now and then I was reminded of Thackeray's wit and wisdom, but never of his vinegar and gall. The interest is strongest in the latter half of the first volume, yet for me the narrative never flagged; where I was not spell-bound I was charmed and amused. Who and what is this lady? Is she young or middle-aged?

. . . . . .

'I return Mr. Thackeray's little illustrated note. How excellent is Goldsmith issuing in full-blown complacency from Filby's shop, with Dr. Johnson walking half benignant, half sarcastic by his side! Captain Steele, too, is very good. Surely if Mr. Thackeray undertook to furnish illustrations he would not be troublesome and procrastinating about what he can dash off so easily and rapidly.'

The following letters, from which Mrs. Gaskell made one or two extracts, probably have their chronological place here:—

TO GEORGE SMITH, ESQ.

'November 20, 1851.

'My dear Sir,—I have the pleasure of forwarding another letter from Miss Martineau. I use the word *pleasure* because you and she will recur to the notion that it must somehow be a trouble to me to act as medium. Indeed, it is no trouble; far otherwise. You will see from what she says that her plan is expanding and soaring. In a note to myself accompanying yours she expresses high and enthusiastic hopes of the success of the book. I tell her not to be too sanguine, and will venture to whisper the same to you. She is in fine spirits now, and they may last to the end, thus enabling her to achieve a great work, but she *may* also be seeing things a little too much under the rose-colour light of an excited imagination. There is something about her nature very buoyant and difficult to subdue. I think you were quite right in what you said about the name.

When she was recovering her spirits needed support, and then she yielded to her friend's entreaty that she would

'That anecdote in the *Times* is evidently of Mr. Thackeray's own telling. It bears his stamp upon it. In reading it I seemed to realise his look and voice. Can it be literally true?

'I have been able to work a little lately, but I have quite made up my mind not to publish till Mr. Thackeray's and Miss Martineau's books have had full career, so you will not think of me till next autumn, or thereabouts; is not this for the best? Meantime it is perhaps premature in me even to allude to the subject, but I do it partly to explain one of my motives for remaining at home this winter. Winter is a better time for working than summer; less liable to interruption. If I could always work, time would not be long, nor hours sad to me; but blank and heavy intervals still occur, when power and will are at variance. This, however, is talking Greek to an eminent and spirited publisher. He does not believe in such things.

'*The Fair Carew*, it seems, is now fairly out. I hope it will receive from the press and the public a just and a discriminating reception. That it is a really good book, though not showy, I maintain. I have glanced at some chapters of another novel of yours—*Florence Sackville*. This, too, appears to me to possess no common merit, though I have not as yet recognised in it the small, quiet, sterling stamp perceptible in *The Fair Carew*, but I am only beginning it.

'Believe me

'Sincerely yours,

'C. BRONTË.'

TO GEORGE SMITH, ESQ.

'November 28, 1851.

'My dear Sir,—I *did* see the notice of *The Fair Carew* in the *Leader*, and I read the *Spectator* which you sent me. The first struck me as a disgrace to Mr. Lewes (it was evidently the production of his accomplished pen). That gentleman has, when he chooses to use it, very good critical acumen, and even possesses in the midst of his presumption and flippancy an instinctive sense of justice, as well as the germ of a kind of generosity; in this instance he shamelessly flings aside all these good properties. But I cannot believe he really read the book. He must surely have taken it up in some dull, sleepy mood, turned the pages three or four at a time, and sat down to write his critique when he ought to have put on his nightcap and gone to bed.

'That in the *Spectator* is a much more honest notice, though infinitely stupid. The poor man used what faculties he had, but the faculty of judging a work of fiction is not amongst his talents. That

visit her. All the time that Miss Brontë's illness had lasted Miss Nussey had been desirous of coming to her; but she

worthy critic had no perception for originality of thought or nicety of delineation; he is blind as a bat and profoundly satisfied with his blindness. However, if it be any consolation to Miss Biggar, she may be told that the *Spectator* has treated *The Fair Carew* with much more respect than it treated *Jane Eyre*; of the latter its most salient remark was that the conception and characters of the book reminded him (the critic) of nothing so much as the grotesque and hideous masks of apes, wolves, and griffins to be found in the carved works of certain old cathedrals. It was in his estimation a morbid monkish fancy, a thing with the head of an owl, the tail of a fox, and the talons of an eagle.

'*Florence Sackville* is a clever book, as you say, and an interesting book of an order quite inferior to *The Fair Carew*, yet meriting both praise and success. What *The Fair Carew* lacks is the striking, the effective, the exciting—just what Mr. Thackeray lacks; and, as he once said to Currer Bell with some bitterness, "I worked ten years before I achieved a real success," intimating at the same time that the said "Currer Bell" had won his small first-work conquest a great deal too cheaply, which would have been true only that Currer Bell had worked quite as long as Mr. Thackeray without publishing.

'I have no doubt that Miss Martineau's opinion of her own work, as far as it has yet advanced, may be implicitly relied on. She is no self-flatterer, but, I think, disposed to be as honest with herself as with others. The only fear is that she may be a little too sanguine in auguring from a brilliant commencement a triumphant finale.

'It is not at all likely that my book will be ready at the time you mention. If my health is spared I shall get on with it as fast as is consistent with its being done, if not well, yet as well as I can do it, *not one whit faster*. When the mood leaves me (it has left me now, without vouchsafing so much as a word of a message when it will return) I put by the MS. and wait till it comes back again; and God knows I sometimes have to wait long—*very* long it seems to me.

'Meantime, if I might make a request to you, it would be this: Please to say nothing about my book till it is written and in your hands. You may not like it. I am not myself elated with it as far as it has gone, and authors, you need not be told, are always tenderly indulgent, even blindly partial, to their own; even if it should turn out reasonably well, still I regard it as ruin to the prosperity of an ephemeral book like a novel to be much talked about beforehand, as if it were something great. People are apt to conceive, or at least to profess, exaggerated expectations, such as no performance can realise; then ensue disappoint-

refused to avail herself of this kindness, saying that 'it was enough to burden herself: that it would be misery to annoy

ment and the due revenge—detraction and failure. If, when I write, I were to think of the critics who, I know, are waiting for Currer Bell, ready "to break all his bones or ever he comes to the bottom of the den," my hand would fall paralysed on my desk. However, I can but do my best, and then muffle my head in the mantle of Patience and sit down at her feet and wait.

'Your mother and sisters are very kind to think of my coming to see them at Christmas, but you must give them my best regards and say that such a step is not to be thought of. Tell your mother not to ask me, because I could only repeat what I have said above. This winter I must stay at home.

'Believe me always

'Sincerely yours,

'C. Brontë.'

The following letter would seem to be one of the only two letters addressed by Charlotte Brontë to Harriet Martineau that were not destroyed by the latter; see note, p. 603. At the time Mrs. Gaskell's *Memoir* was published Miss Martineau wrote indignantly to Mr. Nicholls demanding her letters. They were, of course, immediately returned to her:—

TO MISS HARRIET MARTINEAU.

'December 10, 1851.

'My dear Miss Martineau,—Begging Mr. Smith's pardon, "*Peter*" Murray, to my thinking, won't do. "Murray" is very well, but against "Peter" I protest with lifted hands and eyes. It reminds me of "Peter Parley," "Peter Peebles," and a dozen other "Peters," and in another way sounds quite as fictitious as "Edward Howard," with the disadvantage of being less euphonious.

'Allow me to introduce and earnestly recommend to your good graces Alexander F. Murray, Esq. (F. being supposed to stand for "Fraser"); the initial, depend on it, will tell well, coming in with the most innocent air of reality imaginable.

'*Do* tell Mr. Smith when you write again that you will be called Alexander Fraser Murray, and return him his loan of "Peter" with compliments.

'"Oliver Weld" seems to me excellent. I like the sound and the look of it.

'After some deliberation, some Epicurean balancing between the comparative advantages of tasting my peach now or leaving it to hang untouched a few months longer, when it will be quite ripe, I have come

another;' and, even at her worst time, she tells her friend with humorous glee how coolly she had managed to

to the conclusion that, since "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," it will be wise to accept a bite out of the sunny side of it as soon as you think proper to put out a kind hand and hold it within my reach. So send the MS. whenever you please. Your handwriting is clear and legible. I think I shall be able to read it currently. In return you shall receive an honest account of the impression made.

'My father so far has, I am glad to say, escaped injury from the late sudden change of temperature, but it brought on me a somewhat severe cold, out of the clutches of which I have not yet escaped. I shall be glad when it is over, since, with its accompaniments of influenza, headaches, and toothaches, it tends to stupefaction and depression.

'Believe me

'Yours sincerely and affectionately,

'C. Brontë.'

TO GEORGE SMITH, ESQ.

'December 19, 1851.

'My dear Sir,—I forward to-day the MS. of *P. F. Murray, Esq.* I have read it, but find a little difficulty in telling you what I think about it. As a publisher's book I should think it is good—likely to attract attention and excite discussion. It touches on most of the difficult and important social topics, and abounds in evidence of the writer's high intellectual powers as to the opinions broached or insinuated; they are not in my way, but that does not in the least signify. I wish she had kept off theology. The interest is not very enchaining. The artistic defects are many and great, but few will care for those.'

TO GEORGE SMITH, ESQ.

'December 31, 1851.

'My dear Sir,—A note from Miss Martineau to you is enclosed. You will see she lays stress upon the third volume, but in no shape questions your right to decline the MS.

'I feared you would be disappointed with *Oliver Weld* when you read it, though I had not calculated on its proving so obnoxious in a business point of view as you seem to anticipate. I did not like to tell you how great was my own surprise on perusing the manuscript; the two notes enclosed, which are all I have on the subject, had led me to expect something very different. You will kindly return them to me when you shall have satisfied yourself by perusal that you were not mistaken in supposing that you had been led to expect a work of another tenor.

'Excuse me from saying much on the subject; I am very sorry about

capture one of Miss Nussey's letters to Mr. Brontë, which she suspected was of a kind to aggravate his alarm about his

it altogether. But I do not take it in any shape to heart, nor fear that blame can attach to you in the matter; indeed, I feel very sure Miss Martineau is much too honourable for a moment to impute it.

'I scarcely feel inclined to venture on trying to influence Miss M. any more. There is a peculiar property in her which must sooner or later be recognised as a great inconvenience by such of her acquaintance as admire her intellectual powers and her many excellent personal qualities without being able to agree in her views; she is prone to mistake liking for agreement, and with the sanguine eagerness of her character thinks to sweep you along with her in her whirlwind course. This will not do.

'I am somewhat relieved about my health, being assured that, notwithstanding some harassing symptoms, there is no organic unsoundness whatever, and encouraged to hope for better days if I am careful. The nervous system suffers the most, but I cannot tell how to steel it. Going from home is no cure.

'Once more, be sure not to be too sensitive and anxious about this *Oliver Weld* business. It is a disappointment, a sad disappointment, but we cannot help it.

'Remember me very kindly to your mother and sisters, and believe me always

'Sincerely yours,
'C. Brontë.

'P.S.—You did very wrong to tear up that note you said you had written to me. I should have liked it.'

TO GEORGE SMITH, ESQ.

(*Undated.*)

'Miss Martineau was much pleased with your last, which she sent me to look at. Decidedly it was not bad (I must not say it was *good*, for that would be a "comfit"); besides, though there are many things which might be said on that head and in connection therewith, it is not necessary; yourself must speak to yourself; but I will tell you a thing to be noted, often in your letters and almost always in your conversation, a psychological thing, and not a matter pertaining to style or intellect: I mean an undercurrent of quiet raillery, an inaudible laugh to yourself, a not unkindly but somewhat subtle playing on your correspondent as companion for the time being—in short, a sly touch of a Mephistopheles with the fiend extracted. In the present instance this speciality is perceptible only in the slightest degree—quite imperceptible for the world—but it *is* there, and more or less you have it always. I by no means

daughter's state, 'and, at once conjecturing its tenor, made its contents her own.'

Happily for all parties Mr. Brontë was wonderfully well this winter; good sleep, good spirits, and an excellent steady

mention this as a *fault*, I merely tell you you have it. And I can make the accusation with comfortable impunity, guessing pretty surely that you are too busy just now to deny this or any other charge.

'Miss M. has taken a little scruple into her head that she is doing rather an unhandsome thing to me in making me the instrument of engaging my publisher to publish her book. This notion entirely amuses me; but I rather prefer she should view it in that light than imagine I showed any marked eagerness in encouraging the idea of her offering you the MS.

'I am glad the matter is now settled, as she says when she once begins she will work steadily. She knows nothing about my Quakerlike waiting on the spirit; that is not her plan, nor her nature. So much the better. I am very glad to find you have been to Hastings, though only for two days.

'Believe me

'Sincerely yours,

'C. Brontë.'

TO GEORGE SMITH, ESQ.

(*Undated.*)

'I am truly glad to hear that there are good news of Mr. Taylor, that he is so well, and that his business energies have so far stood the test of the Indian sun.

'I hope your "small troubles" will soon melt away; that paragraph in which you mention them brings to one's mind's eye the movements of a curbed-in, eager steed. You must be patient, you must not champ your bit and rear in that way. Good-bye. I wish there was no more reality in any evil that can possibly come near you than there is in the idea of my feeling anything but gratitude for that unjustly accused letter.

'C. Brontë.'

TO GEORGE SMITH, ESQ.

(Fragment.) (*Undated.*)

. . . . . .

'Poor Mr. Newby! One is very sorry for him after all. I hope your conscience fined you in the sum of five shillings for that pun on the Nubian Desert.

'C. B.'

appetite all seemed to mark vigour; in such a state of health Charlotte could leave him to spend a week with her friend, without any great anxiety.[1]

She benefited greatly by the kind attentions and cheerful society of the family with whom she went to stay. They did not care for her in the least as 'Currer Bell,' but had known and loved her for years as Charlotte Brontë. To them her invalid weakness was only a fresh claim upon their tender regard from the solitary woman whom they had first known as a little motherless schoolgirl.[2]

[1] A letter to Mr. George Smith is dated January 1, 1852:—

'After all I have written a line to Miss Martineau. I grieve to think that the whole matter should be defeated through the fatal perversity of a nature on the whole great and good. I have just said these words to her, and whether they will produce any beneficial effect, or whether she will be displeased, I do not know.

'"What Mr. Smith wanted and expected was another *Deerbrook*. He did not look for politics or theology. *Deerbrook* made you beloved wherever it was read. *Oliver Weld* will not have this effect. It is powerful; it is vivid; it must strike, but it will rarely please. You think perhaps it will do good? Not so much good as *Deerbrook* did. Better the highest part of what is in your own self than all the political and religious controversy in the world. Rest a little while; consider the matter over, and see whether you have not another *Deerbrook* in your heart to give England."'

[2] Miss Brontë wrote the following letter from Miss Nussey's home. It is dated Brookroyd, January 29, 1852, and is addressed to Mrs. Smith:—

'Your note and invitation are very truly kind, but, as Mr. Smith will have told you, I am already from home trying the effect of those remedies you recommend—change of air and scene. I am much better than I was, though I cannot expect to be well all at once.

'When I bid you good-bye in Euston Square Station I determined in my own mind that I would not again come to London except under conditions which are yet unfulfilled. A treat must be *earned* before it can be *enjoyed*, and the treat which a visit to you affords me is yet unearned, and must so remain for a time, how long I do not know.

'I will tell you about my illness and how it came on. I suffered exceedingly from depression of spirits in the autumn. Then, at the commencement of winter, the weather set in very severe. One day when I was walking out I felt a peculiar pain in my right side; I did not think

Miss Brontë wrote to me about this time, and told me something of what she had suffered.

'February 6, 1852.

'Certainly the past winter has been to me a strange time; had I the prospect before me of living it over again, much of it at first, but was not well from that time. Soon after I took cold; the cold struck in, inflammatory action ensued; I had high fever at night, the pain in my side became very severe, there was a constant burning and aching in my chest; I lost my sleep and could eat nothing. My own conclusion was that my lungs were affected, but on consulting a medical man my lungs and chest were pronounced perfectly sound, and it appeared that the inflammation had fallen on the liver. I have since varied, being better sometimes when the internal fever subsided, and again worse when it was increased by change of weather, or any other exciting cause; but I am told that there is no danger, as it is a case of functional derangement, not of organic disease. The solitude of my life I have certainly felt very keenly this winter, but every one has his own burden to bear, and when there is no available remedy it is right to be patient and trust that Providence will in His own good time lighten the load. I have wanted for no attention that kind and faithful servants could give, and my dear father is always kind in his way.

'Give my true regards to all your circle. It is unavailing to say how glad I shall be when I can with a good conscience once more come and see you all. I do not, however, anticipate this event at an early date.'

The following letter was addressed to Mr. George Smith on the same date:—

'Brookroyd, Birstall, Leeds:
'January 29, 1852.

'My dear Sir,—I have rallied very rapidly within the last week, and, as the address of this letter will show you, am now from home, staying with the friend I told you of. I *do* wish now I had delayed my departure from home a few days longer, that I might have shared with my father the true pleasure of receiving you at Haworth Parsonage. And a pleasure your visit would have been, as I have sometimes dimly imagined but never ventured to realise. I shall be returning in about a week, but if you must make your excursion before that time, and if you came northwards and would call at Brookroyd, I am desired to tell you that you would have the warmest Yorkshire welcome. My friends would like to see you. You would find me there, but not exactly ill now; I have only a sort of low intermittent fever which still hangs about me, but which the doctor says will leave me as I grow stronger.

my prayer must necessarily be, "Let this cup pass from me." That depression of spirits, which I thought was gone by when I wrote last, came back again with a heavy recoil; internal congestion ensued, and then inflammation. I had severe pain in my right side, frequent burning and aching in my chest; sleep almost forsook me, or would never come except accompanied by ghastly dreams; appetite vanished, and slow fever was my continual companion. It was some time before I could bring myself to have recourse to medical advice. I thought my lungs were affected, and could feel no confidence in the power of medicine. When at last, however, a doctor was consulted, he declared my lungs and chest sound, and ascribed all my sufferings to derangement of the liver, on which organ it seems the inflammation had fallen. This information was a great relief to my dear father, as well as to myself; but I had subsequently rather sharp medical discipline to undergo, and was much reduced. Though not yet well, it is with deep thankfulness that I can say I am *greatly better*. My sleep, appetite, and strength seem all returning.'

It was a great interest to her to be allowed an early reading of 'Esmond;' and she expressed her thoughts on the subject in a criticising letter to Mr. Smith, who had given her this privilege.

'February 14, 1852.

'My dear Sir,—It has been a great delight to me to read Mr. Thackeray's work; and I so seldom now express my sense of kindness that, for once, you must permit me, without rebuke, to thank you for a pleasure so rare and special. Yet I am not going to praise either Mr. Thackeray or his book. I have read, enjoyed, been interested, and, after all,

'They are hospitable people at Brookroyd, and you would be made comfortable. I and my friend would do our best to amuse you; it is only six miles distant from Leeds; you would have to stay all night.

'Thank your mother from me for her very kind note, and tell her where I am and that I will write to her ere long. Send me a line to say whether we shall see you, and when.'

o o

feel full as much ire and sorrow as gratitude and admiration. And still one can never lay down a book of his without the last two feelings having their part, be the subject of treatment what it may. In the first half of the book what chiefly struck me was the wonderful manner in which the writer throws himself into the spirit and letters of the times whereof he treats; the allusions, the illustrations, the style, all seem to me so masterly in their exact keeping, their harmonious consistency, their nice, natural truth, their pure exemption from exaggeration. No second-rate imitator can write in that way; no coarse scene-painter can charm us with an allusion so delicate and perfect. But what bitter satire, what relentless dissection of diseased subjects! Well, and this, too, is right, or would be right, if the savage surgeon did not seem so fiercely pleased with his work. Thackeray likes to dissect an ulcer or an aneurism; he has pleasure in putting his cruel knife or probe into quivering living flesh. Thackeray would not like all the world to be good; no great satirist would like society to be perfect.

'As usual he is unjust to women, quite unjust. There is hardly any punishment he does not deserve for making Lady Castlewood peep through a keyhole, listen at a door, and be jealous of a boy and a milkmaid. Many other things I noticed that, for my part, grieved and exasperated me as I read; but then, again, came passages so true, so deeply thought, so tenderly felt, one could not help forgiving and admiring.[1]

. . . . . .

But I wish he could be told not to care much for dwelling on the political or religious intrigues of the times. Thackeray, in his heart, does not value political or religious intrigues of any age or date. He likes to show us human nature at

[1] The omitted passage in this letter to Mr. Smith runs as follows:—

'I wish there was any one whose word he cared for to bid him God speed, to tell him to go on courageously with the book; he may yet make it the best he has ever written.'

home, as he himself daily sees it; his wonderful observant faculty likes to be in action. In him this faculty is a sort of captain and leader; and if ever any passage in his writings lacks interest it is when this master-faculty is for a time thrust into a subordinate position. I think such is the case in the former half of the present volume. Towards the middle he throws off restraint, becomes himself, and is strong to the close. Everything now depends on the second and third volumes. If, in pith and interest, they fall short of the first, a true success cannot ensue. If the continuation be an improvement upon the commencement, if the stream gather force as it rolls, Thackeray will triumph. Some people have been in the habit of terming him the second writer of the day; it just depends on himself whether or not these critics shall be justified in their award. He need not be the second. God made him second to no man. If I were he, I would show myself as I am, not as critics report me; at any rate I would do my best. Mr. Thackeray is easy and indolent, and seldom cares to do his best. Thank you once more; and believe me yours sincerely,

'C. Brontë.' [1]

Miss Brontë's health continued such that she could not apply herself to writing, as she wished, for many weeks after

[1] There is a further letter to Mr. Smith dated February 17:—

'I do not think my note would do Mr. Thackeray much good, but, as (so far as I recollect) it contains nothing I can have any objection to his seeing, you are quite at liberty to use your own discretion in the matter. What is said in that note I would, if I had nerve, and could speak without hesitating and looking like an idiot, say to himself, face to face, prepared, of course, for any amount of sarcasm in reply, prepared too for those misconstructions which are the least flattering to human pride, and which we see and take in and smile at quietly and put by sadly; little ingenuities in which, if I mistake not, Mr. Thackeray, with all his greatness, excels.

'I have never seen the *Paris Sketch Book*, but you really must send nothing more for the present, at least not by post; let your recklessly lavished "queen's heads" repose for a while.'

the serious attack from which she had suffered. There was not very much to cheer her in the few events that touched her interests during this time. She heard in March of the death of a friend's relation in the colonies; and we see something of what was the corroding dread at her heart.

'The news of Ellen's[1] death came to me last week in a letter from Mary; a long letter, which wrung my heart so, in its simple, strong, truthful emotion, I have only ventured to read it once. It ripped up half-scarred wounds with terrible force. The death-bed was just the same—breath failing, &c. She fears she will now, in her dreary solitude, become a "stern, harsh, selfish woman." This fear struck home; again and again have I felt it for myself, and what is *my* position to Mary's? May God help her, as God only can help!'

Again and again her friend urged her to leave home; nor were various invitations wanting to enable her to do this, when these constitutional accesses of low spirits preyed too much upon her in her solitude. But she would not allow herself any such indulgence, unless it became absolutely necessary from the state of her health. She dreaded the perpetual recourse to such stimulants as change of scene and society, because of the reaction that was sure to follow. As far as she could see her life was ordained to be lonely, and she must subdue her nature to her life, and, if possible, bring the two into harmony. When she could employ herself in fiction all was comparatively well. The characters were her companions in the quiet hours, which she spent utterly alone, unable often to stir out of doors for many days together. The interests of the persons in her novels supplied the lack of interest in her life; and Memory and Imagination found their appropriate work, and ceased to prey upon

[1] This was Ellen Taylor, who went out to Wellington, New Zealand, to be a companion to her cousin, Charlotte Brontë's old schoolfellow, Mary Taylor.

her vitals. But too frequently she could not write, could not see her people, nor hear them speak; a great mist of headache had blotted them out; they were non-existent to her.

This was the case all through the present spring; and anxious as her publishers were for its completion, 'Villette' stood still. Even her letters to her friends are scarce and brief. Here and there I find a sentence in them which can be extracted, and which is worth preserving.[1]

[1] On March 11 she writes to Mr. George Smith—

'I am very glad to hear that Mr. Thackeray is "getting on," as he says, and it is to be hoped the stimulus may prove more than temporary. Is not the publication of the lectures "with no end of illustrations" a most commendable idea? I should think every one who heard them delivered will like to read them over again at leisure; for my own part I can hardly imagine a greater treat, were it only for the opportunity thereby afforded of fishing for faults and fallacies, and of fuming, fretting, and brooding at ease over the passages that excited one's wrath. In listening to a lecture you have not time to be angry enough. Mr. Thackeray's worship of his Baal—Bel—Bülzebub (they are all one), his false god of a Fielding—is a thing I greatly desire to consider deliberately. In that red book of yours (which I returned long ago) there was a portrait of the author of *Jonathan Wild*. In the cynical prominence of the under-jaw one reads the man. It was the stamp of one who would never see his neighbours (especially his women neighbours) as they *are*, but as they *might* be under the worst circumstances. In Mr. Thackeray's own nature is a small seasoning of this virtue, but it does not (I hope) prevail throughout his whole being.

'I have read the *Paris Sketches* slowly, and by regulated allowances of so much per diem. I was so afraid of exhausting the precious provision too quickly. What curious traces one finds (at least so it struck me) of a somewhat wild, irregular, and reckless life being led at that time by the author! And yet how good, how truthful and sagacious are many of the papers—such as touch on politics, for instance—and above all the critical articles! And then whatever vinegar and gall, whatever idle froth, a book of Thackeray's may contain, it has no dregs; you never go and wash your hands when you put it down, nor rinse your mouth to take away the flavour of a degraded soul. Perverse he may be and is, but, to do him justice, *not* degraded—no, never.

'Is the first number of *Bleak House* generally admired? I liked the Chancery part, but when it passes into the autobiographic form, and the young woman who announces that she is not "bright" begins her history,

'Mary G.'s letter is very interesting; it shows a mind one cannot but truly admire. Compare its serene trusting strength with poor Mrs. Joseph Taylor's vacillating dependence. When the latter was in her first burst of happiness I never remember the feeling finding vent in expressions of gratitude to God. There was always a continued claim upon your sympathy in the mistrust and doubt she felt of her own bliss. Mary believes; her faith is grateful and at peace: yet, while happy in herself, how thoughtful she is for others!'

'March 23, 1852.

'You say, dear Ellen, that you often wish I would chat

it seems to me too often weak and twaddling; an amiable nature is caricatured, not faithfully rendered, in Miss Esther Summerson.

'Did I tell you that I had heard from Miss Martineau, and that she has quite thrown aside *Oliver Weld* and calls it now "a foolish prank"? For the present she declines turning her attention to any other work of fiction; she says her time for writing fiction is past: this may be so.

'Please to tell Mr. Williams that I mean (D.V.) to look over *Shirley* soon and to send him a list of errata, but I marvel at your courage in contemplating a reprint; I cannot conceive a score of copies being sold.'

She writes again on March 21—

'I have read and now return Mr. Thackeray's second volume. The complaint, I suppose, will be that there is too little story. I thought so myself in reading the first part of this packet of manuscript. I felt tedium in the first campaign of Harry Esmond; the second and third seemed to me to kindle the spirit. The character of Marlborough I thought a masterly piece of writing. But where is the use of giving one's broken impressions of such a book? It ought not to be judged piecemeal.

'You are kind enough to inquire after Currer Bell's health. Thank you; he is better; latterly he has been much better; if he could continue so well he would look up yet; but, I say again, expect no good of him this summer.

'I suppose that Mr. Forster, about whom you inquire, is a Mr. F. from the neighbourhood of Bradford; he wrote an answer to Macaulay's attack on Penn on the Marshes; he is, or *was*, a Quaker himself; he has published also letters in the *Leader* on Communion or the Associative Principle.'

on paper, as you do. How can I? Where are my materials? Is my life fertile in subjects of chat? What callers do I see? What visits do I pay? No, you must chat, and I must listen, and say "Yes," and "No," and "Thank you!" for five minutes' recreation. . . .

'I am amused at the interest you take in politics. Don't expect to rouse me; to me all Ministries and all Oppositions seem to be pretty much alike. Disraeli was factious as leader of the Opposition; Lord John Russell is going to be factious, now that he has stepped into Disraeli's shoes. Lord Derby's "Christian love and spirit" is worth three halfpence farthing.'

TO W. S. WILLIAMS, ESQ.

'March 25, 1852.

'My dear Sir,—Mr. Smith intimated a short time since that he had some thoughts of publishing a reprint of "Shirley." Having revised the work, I now enclose the errata. I have likewise sent off to-day, per rail, a return box of Cornhill books.

'I have lately read, with great pleasure, "The Two Families."[1] This work, it seems, should have reached me in January; but, owing to a mistake, it was detained at the Dead Letter Office, and lay there nearly two months. I liked the commencement very much; the close seemed to me scarcely equal to "Rose Douglas." I thought the authoress committed a mistake in shifting the main interest from the two personages on whom it first rests—viz. Ben Wilson and Mary—to other characters of quite inferior conception. Had she made Ben and Mary her hero and heroine, and continued the development of their fortunes and characters in the same truthful natural vein in which she commences it, an excellent, even an original book might have been the result. As for Lilias and Ronald, they are mere romantic figments, with nothing of the genuine Scottish

[1] *The Two Families* and *Rose Douglas* were both published in 1852. Their author was Mrs. S. R. Whitehead.

peasant about them; they do not even speak the Caledonian dialect; they palaver like a fine lady and gentleman.

'I ought long since to have acknowledged the gratification with which I read Miss Kavanagh's "Women of Christianity." Her charity and (on the whole) her impartiality are very beautiful. She touches, indeed, with too gentle a hand the theme of Elizabeth of Hungary; and, in her own mind, she evidently misconstrues the fact of Protestant charities *seeming* to be fewer than Catholic. She forgets, or does not know, that Protestantism is a quieter creed than Romanism; as it does not clothe its priesthood in scarlet, so neither does it set up its good women for saints, canonise their names, and proclaim their good works. In the records of man their almsgiving will not, perhaps, be found registered, but heaven has its account as well as earth.

'With kind regards to yourself and family, who, I trust, have all safely weathered the rough winter lately past, as well as the east winds, which are still nipping our spring in Yorkshire, I am, my dear Sir, yours sincerely,

'C. Brontë.'

'April 3, 1852.

'My dear Sir,—The box arrived quite safely, and I very much thank you for the contents, which are most kindly selected.

'As you wished me to say what I thought of "The School for Fathers,"[1] I hastened to read it. The book seems to me clever, interesting, very amusing, and likely to please generally. There is a merit in the choice of ground which is not yet too hackneyed; the comparative freshness of subject, character, and epoch gives the tale a certain attractiveness. There is also, I think, a graphic rendering of situations, and a lively talent for describing whatever is

[1] *The School for Fathers* was written by Josepha Gulston under the pseudonym of 'Talbot Gwynne.' She also wrote *Young Singleton*, *The School for Dreamers*, *Silas Barnstarke*, and *Nanette and her Lovers*.

visible and tangible—what the eye meets on the surface of things. The humour appears to me such as would answer well on the stage; most of the scenes seem to demand dramatic accessories to give them their full effect. But I think one cannot with justice bestow higher praise than this. To speak candidly, I felt, in reading the tale, a wondrous hollowness in the moral and sentiment; a strange dilettante shallowness in the purpose and feeling. After all "Jack" is not much better than a "Tony Lumpkin," and there is no very great breadth of choice between the clown he *is* and the fop his father would have made him. The grossly material life of the old English fox-hunter and the frivolous existence of the fine gentleman present extremes, each in its way so repugnant that one feels half inclined to smile when called upon to sentimentalise over the lot of a youth forced to pass from one to the other; torn from the stables to be ushered, perhaps, into the ball-room. Jack dies mournfully indeed, and you are sorry for the poor fellow's untimely end; but you cannot forget that if he had not been thrust into the way of Colonel Penruddock's weapon he might possibly have broken his neck in a fox hunt. The character of Sir Thomas Warren is excellent; consistent throughout. That of Mr. Addison not bad, but sketchy, a mere outline—wanting colour and finish. The man's portrait is there, and his costume, and fragmentary anecdotes of his life; but where is the man's nature—soul and self? I say nothing about the female characters—not one word; only that Lydia seems to me like a pretty little actress, prettily dressed, gracefully appearing and disappearing, and reappearing in a genteel comedy, assuming the proper sentiments of her part with all due tact and naïveté and—that is all.

'Your description of the model man of business is true enough, I doubt not; but we will not fear that society will ever be brought quite to this standard; human nature (bad as it is) has, after all, elements that forbid it. But the very tendency to such a consummation—the marked tendency, I fear, of the day—produces, no doubt, cruel

suffering. Yet, when the evil of competition passes a certain limit, must it not in time work its own cure? I suppose it will, but then through some convulsed crisis, shattering all around it like an earthquake. Meantime for how many is life made a struggle, enjoyment and rest curtailed; labour terribly enhanced beyond almost what nature can bear! I often think that this world would be the most terrible of enigmas, were it not for the firm belief that there is a world to come, where conscientious effort and patient pain will meet their reward.

'Believe me, my dear Sir, sincerely yours, C. BRONTË.'

A letter to her old Brussels schoolfellow gives a short retrospect of the dreary winter she had passed through.[1]

'Haworth: April 12, 1852.

'. . . I struggled through the winter, and the early part of the spring, often with great difficulty. My friend[2] stayed with me a few days in the early part of January; she could not be spared longer. I was better during her visit, but had a relapse soon after she left me, which reduced my strength very much. It cannot be denied that the solitude of my position fearfully aggravated its other evils. Some long stormy days and nights there were, when I felt such a craving for support and companionship as I cannot express. Sleepless, I lay awake night after night, weak and unable to occupy myself. I sat in my chair day after day, the saddest memories my only company. It was a time I shall never

[1] This letter to Miss Lætitia Wheelwright commences—

'Dear Lætitia,—Your last letter gave me much concern. I had hoped you were long ere this restored to your usual health, and it both pained and surprised me to hear that you still suffer so much from debility. I cannot help thinking your constitution is naturally sound and healthy. Can it be the air of London which disagrees with you? For myself, I struggled through the winter. . . .'

[2] That is, Miss Ellen Nussey. Miss Wheelwright and Miss Nussey never met.

forget; but God sent it, and it must have been for the best.

'I am better now; and very grateful do I feel for the restoration of tolerable health; but, as if there was always to be some affliction, papa, who enjoyed wonderful health during the whole winter, is ailing with his spring attack of bronchitis. I earnestly trust it may pass over in the comparatively ameliorated form in which it has hitherto shown itself.

'Let me not forget to answer your question about the cataract. Tell your papa that *my* father was seventy at the time he underwent an operation; he was most reluctant to try the experiment; could not believe that, at his age, and with his want of robust strength, it would succeed. I was obliged to be very decided in the matter, and to act entirely on my own responsibility. Nearly six years have now elapsed since the cataract was extracted (it was not merely depressed); he has never once during that time regretted the step, and a day seldom passes that he does not express gratitude and pleasure at the restoration of that inestimable privilege of vision whose loss he once knew.'

I had given Miss Brontë, in one of my letters, an outline of the story on which I was then engaged, and in reply she says—

'The sketch you give of your work (respecting which I am, of course, dumb) seems to me very noble; and its purpose may be as useful in practical result as it is high and just in theoretical tendency. Such a book may restore hope and energy to many who thought they had forfeited their right to both, and open a clear course for honourable effort to some who deemed that they and all honour had parted company in this world.

'Yet—hear my protest!

'Why should she die? Why are we to shut up the book weeping?

'My heart fails me already at the thought of the pang it will have to undergo. And yet you must follow the impulse of your own inspiration. If *that* commands the slaying of the victim, no bystander has a right to put out his hand to stay the sacrificial knife; but I hold you a stern priestess in these matters.'

As the milder weather came on her health improved, and her power of writing increased. She set herself with redoubled vigour to the work before her, and denied herself pleasure for the purpose of steady labour. Hence she writes to her friend—

'May 11.

'Dear Ellen,—I must adhere to my resolution of neither visiting nor being visited at present. Stay you quietly at B(rookroyd) till you go into Sussex, as I shall stay at Haworth; as sincere a farewell can be taken with the heart as with the lips, and perhaps less painful. I am glad the weather is changed; the return of the south-west wind suits me; but I hope you have no cause to regret the departure of your favourite east wind. . . . I read in a French book lately a sentence to this effect, that "marriage might be defined as the state of twofold selfishness." Let the single therefore take comfort. Thank you for Mary G.'s letter. She *does* seem most happy; and I cannot tell you how much more real, lasting, and better warranted her happiness seems than ever Amelia's did. I think so much of it is in herself, and her own serene, pure, trusting, religious nature. Amelia's always gives me the idea of a vacillating, unsteady rapture, entirely dependent on circumstances with all their fluctuations. If Mary lives to be a mother, you will then see a greater difference.

'I wish you, dear Ellen, all health and enjoyment in your visit; and, as far as one can judge at present, there seems a fair prospect of the wish being realised.—Yours sincerely,

'C. Brontë.'

CHAPTER XXV

THE reader will remember that Anne Brontë had been interred in the churchyard of the Old Church at Scarborough. Charlotte had left directions for a tombstone to be placed over her; but many a time during the solitude of the past winter her sad, anxious thoughts had revisited the scene of that last great sorrow, and she had wondered whether all decent services had been rendered to the memory of the dead, until at last she came to a silent resolution to go and see for herself whether the stone and inscription were in a satisfactory state.[1]

'Cliff House, Filey: June 6, 1852.

'Dear Ellen,—I am at Filey, utterly alone. Do not be angry; the step is right. I considered it, and resolved on it with due deliberation. Change of air was necessary; there were reasons why I should *not* go to the south, and why I should come here. On Friday I went to Scarborough, visited the churchyard and stone. It must be refaced and relettered; there are five errors.[2] I gave the necessary

[1] On May 22 she writes to Mr. Smith—

'Your note enclosing a bank post bill for the amount of my dividend reached me safely. Occupied as you are, I will not at present detain you by more than an acknowledgment. Should you write to me in the course of the next fortnight or three weeks, my address will be Cliff House, Filey, East Riding, Yorkshire. It is a small watering-place on the coast where I propose going for change of air.'

[2] For the corrected inscription see note, p. 409.

directions. *That* duty, then, is done; long has it lain heavy on my mind; and that was a pilgrimage I felt I could only make alone.

'I am in our old lodgings at Mrs. Smith's; not, however, in the same rooms, but in less expensive apartments. They seemed glad to see me, remembered you and me very well, and seemingly with great good-will. The daughter who used to wait on us is just married. Filey seems to me much altered; more lodging-houses—some of them very handsome—have been built; the sea has all its old grandeur. I walk on the sands a good deal, and try *not* to feel desolate and melancholy. How sorely my heart longs for you I need not say. I have bathed once: it seemed to do me good. I may, perhaps, stay here a fortnight. There are as yet scarcely any visitors. A Lady Wenlock is staying at the large house of which you used so vigilantly to observe the inmates. One day I set out with intent to trudge to Filey Bridge, but was frightened back by two cows. I mean to try again some morning. I left papa well. I have been a good deal troubled with headache, and with some pain in the side, since I came here, but I feel that this has been owing to the cold wind, for very cold has it been till lately; at present I feel better. Shall I send the papers to you as usual? Write again directly, and tell me this, and anything and everything else that comes into your mind.—Believe me yours faithfully, C. BRONTË.'

'Filey: June 16, 1852.

'Dear Ellen,—Be quite easy about me. I really think I am better for my stay at Filey; that I have derived more benefit from it than I dared to anticipate. I believe, could I stay here two months, and enjoy something like social cheerfulness as well as exercise and good air, my health would be quite renewed. This, however, cannot possibly be; but I am most thankful for the good received. I stay here another week.

'I return E. S.'s letter. I am sorry for her; I believe

she suffers; but I do not much like her style of expressing herself. . . . Grief as well as joy manifests itself in most different ways in different people; and I doubt not she is sincere and in earnest when she talks of her "precious, sainted father;" but I could wish she used simpler language.'

Soon after her return from Filey she was alarmed by a very serious and sharp attack of illness with which Mr. Brontë was seized. There was some fear, for a few days, that his sight was permanently lost, and his spirits sank painfully under this dread.

'This prostration of spirits,' writes his daughter, 'which accompanies anything like a relapse, is almost the most difficult point to manage. Dear Ellen, you are tenderly kind in offering your society; but rest very tranquil where you are; be fully assured that it is not now, nor under present circumstances, that I feel the lack either of society or occupation; my time is pretty well filled up, and my thoughts appropriated. . . . I cannot permit myself to comment much on the chief contents of your last; advice is not necessary: as far as I can judge you seem hitherto enabled to take these trials in a good and wise spirit. I can only pray that such combined strength and resignation may be continued to you. Submission, courage, exertion, when practicable—these seem to be the weapons with which we must fight life's long battle.'

I suppose that, during the very time when her thoughts were thus fully occupied with anxiety for her father, she received some letters from her publishers, making inquiry as to the progress of the work which they knew she had in hand, as I find the following letter to Mr. Williams, bearing reference to some of Messrs. Smith, Elder, & Co.'s proposed arrangements:—

TO W. S. WILLIAMS, ESQ.

'July 28, 1852.

'My dear Sir,—Is it in contemplation to publish the new edition of "Shirley" soon? Would it not be better to defer it for a time? In reference to a part of your letter, permit me to express this wish—and I trust in so doing I shall not be regarded as stepping out of my position as an author, and encroaching on the arrangements of business—viz. that no announcement of a new work by the author of "Jane Eyre" shall be made till the MS. of such work is actually in my publisher's hands. Perhaps we are none of us justified in speaking very decidedly where the future is concerned; but for some too much caution in such calculations can scarcely be observed: amongst this number I must class myself. Nor in doing so can I assume an apologetic tone. He does right who does his best.

'Last autumn I got on for a time quickly. I ventured to look forward to spring as the period of publication: my health gave way; I passed such a winter as, having been once experienced, will never be forgotten. The spring proved little better than a protraction of trial. The warm weather and a visit to the sea have done me much good physically; but as yet I have recovered neither elasticity of animal spirits nor flow of the power of composition. And if it were otherwise the difference would be of no avail; my time and thoughts are at present taken up with close attendance on my father, whose health is just now in a very critical state, the heat of the weather having produced determination of blood to the head.—I am yours sincerely,

'C. BRONTË.'

Before the end of August Mr. Brontë's convalescence became quite established, and he was anxious to resume his duties for some time before his careful daughter would permit him.[1]

[1] Charlotte Brontë writes to Mr. George Smith on August 19—

'I am thankful to say that my father is now much better, though still weak. The danger is, I trust, subsided, but I am warned that the

On September 14 the 'Great Duke' died. He had been, as we have seen, her hero from childhood; but I find no further reference to him at this time than what is given in the following extract from a letter to her friend:[1]—

'I do hope and believe the changes you have been having this summer will do you permanent good, notwithstanding the pain with which they have been too often mingled. Yet I feel glad that you are soon coming home; and I really must not trust myself to say how much I wish the time were come when, without let or hindrance, I could once more welcome you to Haworth. But oh! I don't get on: I

attack has been of an apoplectic character, a circumstance which, at his age, brings anxieties not easily dispelled. His mind, however, has not been in the least clouded, and the muscular paralysis which existed for a time seems quite gone now. I am assured that with his excellent constitution there is every prospect that a return of the seizure may be long delayed.

'I am glad to hear that your mother is at Woodford, as I know how much she is attached to the country and its quiet pleasures; your sisters also will, no doubt, enjoy the change at this season. I do not wonder that you all felt regret at parting from Alick; he seemed to me an amiable boy. It is to be hoped, however, that the climate of Bombay will agree with him, and if it should not less than a month will bring him once more home.

'I had better refrain from commenting on the brief glimpse you give of what your own labours have lately been. Surely you will now take some rest. Such systematic overtasking of mind and body may be borne for a time by some constitutions, but in the end it tells on the most vigorous. If physical strength stands it out, the brain suffers, and where the brain is continually irritated I believe both peace of mind and health of body are endangered.

'*Shirley* looks very respectable in her new attire.

'Do not send the third volume of Mr. Thackeray's MS. I would rather wait to see it in print. It will be something to look forward to.

'My stay at the seaside was of great use. As to last winter and spring, they are quite gone, and I have no wish to dwell upon their passage.

'Give my kind remembrances to your mother and sisters when you see them.'

[1] Letter to Ellen Nussey, headed 'Friday' (1852).

feel fretted—incapable—sometimes very low. However at present the subject must not be dwelt upon; it presses me too hardly, nearly, and painfully. Less than ever can I taste or know pleasure till this work is wound up. And yet I often sit up in bed at night, thinking of and wishing for you. Thank you for the "Times;" what it said on the mighty and mournful subject was *well* said. All at once the whole nation seems to take a just view of that great character. There was a review too of an American book, which I was glad to see. Read "Uncle Tom's Cabin:" probably, though, you have read it.

'Papa's health continues satisfactory, thank God! As for me, my wretched liver has been disordered again of late, but I hope it is now going to be on better behaviour; it hinders me in working—depresses both power and tone of feeling. I must expect this derangement from time to time.'

Haworth was in an unhealthy state, as usual; and both Miss Brontë and Tabby suffered severely from the prevailing epidemics. The former was long in shaking off the effects of this illness. In vain she resolved against allowing herself any society or change of scene until she had accomplished her labour. She was too ill to write; and with illness came on the old heaviness of heart, recollections of the past, and anticipations of the future. At last Mr. Brontë expressed so strong a wish that her friend should be asked to visit her, and she felt some little refreshment so absolutely necessary, that on October 9 she begged her to come to Haworth, just for a single week.

'I thought I would persist in denying myself till I had done my work, but I find it won't do; the matter refuses to progress, and this excessive solitude presses too heavily; so let me see your dear face, Ellen, just for one reviving week.'

But she would only accept the company of her friend for the exact time specified. She thus writes to Miss Wooler on October 21:—

'Ellen has only been my companion one little week. I would not have her any longer, for I am disgusted with myself and my delays, and consider it was a weak yielding to temptation in me to send for her at all; but in truth my spirits were getting low—prostrate sometimes—and she has done me inexpressible good. I wonder when I shall see you at Haworth again; both my father and the servants have again and again insinuated a distinct wish that you should be requested to come in the course of the summer and autumn, but I have always turned rather a deaf ear; "Not yet," was my thought, "I want first to be free;" work first, then pleasure.'

Miss Nussey's visit had done her much good. Pleasant companionship during the day produced, for the time, the unusual blessing of calm repose at night; and, after her friend's departure, she was well enough to 'fall to business,' and write away, almost incessantly, at her story of 'Villette,' now drawing to a conclusion. The following letter to Mr. Smith seems to have accompanied the first part of the MS.:—

'October 30, 1852.

'My dear Sir,—You must notify honestly what you think of "Villette" when you have read it. I can hardly tell you how I hunger to hear some opinion beside my own, and how I have sometimes desponded, and almost despaired, because there was no one to whom to read a line, or of whom to ask a counsel. "Jane Eyre" was not written under such circumstances, nor were two-thirds of "Shirley." I got so miserable about it, I could bear no allusion to the book. It is not finished yet; but now I hope. As to the anonymous publication, I have this to say: If the withholding of the author's name should tend materially to injure the publisher's interest, to interfere with booksellers' orders, &c., I would not press the point; but if no such detriment is contingent I should be most thankful for the sheltering shadow of an incognito. I seem to dread the advertisements—the large-lettered "Currer Bell's New Novel," or "New Work

by the Author of 'Jane Eyre.'" These, however, I feel well enough, are the transcendentalisms of a retired wretch; so you must speak frankly. . . . I shall be glad to see "Colonel Esmond." My objection to the second volume lay here: I thought it contained decidedly too much History—too little Story.'

In another letter referring to 'Esmond' she uses the following words:—

'The third volume seemed to me to possess the most sparkle, impetus, and interest. Of the first and second my judgment was that parts of them were admirable; but there was the fault of containing too much History—too little Story. I hold that a work of fiction ought to be a work of creation: that the *real* should be sparingly introduced in pages dedicated to the *ideal*. Plain household bread is a far more wholesome and necessary thing than cake; yet who would like to see the brown loaf placed on the table for dessert? In the second volume the author gives us an ample supply of excellent brown bread; in his third, only such a portion as gives substance, like the crumbs of bread in a well-made, not too rich, plum pudding.'

Her letter to Mr. Smith containing the allusion to 'Esmond,' which reminded me of the quotation just given, continues—

'You will see that "Villette" touches on no matter of public interest. I cannot write books handling the topics of the day; it is of no use trying. Nor can I write a book for its moral. Nor can I take up a philanthropic scheme, though I honour philanthropy; and voluntarily and sincerely veil my face before such a mighty subject as that handled in Mrs. Beecher Stowe's work, "Uncle Tom's Cabin." To manage these great matters rightly they must be long and practically studied—their bearings known intimately, and their evils felt genuinely; they must not be taken up as a business matter and a trading speculation. I doubt not

Mrs. Stowe had felt the iron of slavery enter into her heart, from childhood upwards, long before she ever thought of writing books. The feeling throughout her work is sincere and not got up. Remember to be an honest critic of "Villette," and tell Mr. Williams to be unsparing: not that I am likely to alter anything, but I want to know his impressions and yours.'

TO G. SMITH, ESQ.

'November 3.

'My dear Sir,—I feel very grateful for your letter; it relieved me much, for I was a good deal harassed by doubts as to how "Villette" might appear in other eyes than my own. I feel in some degree authorised to rely on your favourable impressions, because you are quite right where you hint disapprobation. You have exactly hit two points at least where I was conscious of defect—the discrepancy, the want of perfect harmony, between Graham's boyhood and manhood—the angular abruptness of his change of sentiment towards Miss Fanshawe. You must remember, though, that in secret he had for some time appreciated that young lady at a somewhat depressed standard—held her a *little* lower than the angels. But still the reader ought to have been better made to feel this preparation towards a change of mood. As to the publishing arrangements, I leave them to Cornhill. There is, undoubtedly, a certain force in what you say about the inexpediency of affecting a mystery which cannot be sustained; so you must act as you think is for the best. I submit, also, to the advertisements in large letters, but under protest, and with a kind of ostrich longing for concealment. Most of the third volume is given to the development of the "crabbed Professor's" character. Lucy must not marry Dr. John; he is far too youthful, handsome, bright-spirited, and sweet-tempered; he is a "curled darling" of Nature and of Fortune, and must draw a prize in life's lottery. His wife must be young, rich, pretty; he must be made very happy indeed. If Lucy marries anybody it must be the Professor—a man in whom

there is much to forgive, much to "put up with." But I am not leniently disposed towards Miss *Frost*: from the beginning I never meant to appoint her lines in pleasant places. The conclusion of this third volume is still a matter of some anxiety: I can but do my best, however. It would speedily be finished, could I ward off certain obnoxious headaches, which, whenever I get into the spirit of my work, are apt to seize and prostrate me. . . .

'Colonel Henry Esmond is just arrived. He looks very antique and distinguished in his Queen Anne's garb; the periwig, sword, lace, and ruffles are very well represented by the old "Spectator" type.'

In reference to a sentence towards the close of this letter, I may mention what she told me; that Mr. Brontë was anxious that her new tale should end well, as he disliked novels which left a melancholy impression upon the mind; and he requested her to make her hero and heroine (like the heroes and heroines in fairy tales) 'marry, and live very happily ever after.' But the idea of M. Paul Emanuel's death at sea was stamped on her imagination, till it assumed the distinct force of reality; and she could no more alter her fictitious ending than if they had been facts which she was relating. All she could do in compliance with her father's wish was so to veil the fate in oracular words as to leave it to the character and discernment of her readers to interpret her meaning.

TO W. S. WILLIAMS, ESQ.

'November 6, 1852.

'My dear Sir,—I must not delay thanking you for your kind letter, with its candid and able commentary on "Villette." With many of your strictures I concur. The third volume may, perhaps, do away with some of the objections; others still remain in force. I do not think the interest culminates anywhere to the degree you would wish. What climax there is does not come on till near the conclusion; and even then I doubt whether the regular novel-reader will consider the "agony piled sufficiently high" (as the

Americans say), or the colours dashed on to the canvas with the proper amount of daring. Still, I fear, they must be satisfied with what is offered: my palette affords no brighter tints; were I to attempt to deepen the reds, or burnish the yellows, I should but botch.

'Unless I am mistaken the emotion of the book will be found to be kept throughout in tolerable subjection. As to the name of the heroine, I can hardly express what subtlety of thought made me decide upon giving her a cold name; but, at first, I called her "Lucy Snowe" (spelt with an "e"), which Snowe I afterwards changed to "Frost." Subsequently I rather regretted the change, and wished it "Snowe" again. If not too late I should like the alteration to be made now throughout the MS. A *cold* name she must have; partly, perhaps, on the "*lucus a non lucendo*" principle—partly on that of the "fitness of things," for she has about her an external coldness.[1]

'You say that she may be thought morbid and weak, unless the history of her life be more fully given. I consider that she *is* both morbid and weak at times; her character sets up no pretensions to unmixed strength, and anybody living her life would necessarily become morbid. It was no impetus of healthy feeling which urged her to the confessional, for instance; it was the semi-delirium of solitary grief and sickness. If, however, the book does not express all this, there must be a great fault somewhere. I might explain away a few other points, but it would be too much like drawing a picture and then writing underneath the name of the object intended to be represented. We know what sort of a pencil that is which needs an ally in the pen.

'Thanking you again for the clearness and fulness with which you have responded to my request for a statement of impressions, I am, my dear Sir, yours very sincerely,

'C. Brontë.

[1] Miss Brontë wrote *Villette* on scraps of paper which she afterwards neatly copied out. The 'clean copy' of *Villette* is in the possession of Mr. George Smith. Here the name *Frost* is scratched through and *Snowe* is substituted.

'I trust the work will be seen in MS. by no one except Mr. Smith and yourself.'

'November 10, 1852.

'My dear Sir,—I only wished the publication of "Shirley" to be delayed till "Villette" was nearly ready; so that there can now be no objection to its being issued whenever you think fit. About putting the MS. into type I can only say that, should I be able to proceed with the third volume at my average rate of composition, and with no more than the average amount of interruptions, I should hope to have it ready in about three weeks. I leave it to you to decide whether it would be better to delay the printing that space of time, or to commence it immediately. It would certainly be more satisfactory if you were to see the third volume before printing the first and the second; yet, if delay is likely to prove injurious, I do not think it is indispensable. I have read the third volume of "Esmond." I found it both entertaining and exciting to me; it seems to possess an impetus and excitement beyond the other two; that movement and brilliancy its predecessors sometimes wanted never fail here. In certain passages I thought Thackeray used all his powers; their grand, serious force yielded a profound satisfaction. "At last he puts forth his strength," I could not help saying to myself. No character in the book strikes me as more masterly than that of Beatrix; its conception is fresh, and its delineation vivid. It is peculiar; it has impressions of a new kind—new, at least, to me. Beatrix is not, in herself, all bad. So much does she sometimes reveal of what is good and great as to suggest this feeling; you would think she was urged by a Fate. You would think that some antique doom presses on her house, and that once in so many generations its brightest ornament was to become its greatest disgrace. At times what is good in her struggles against this terrible destiny, but the Fate conquers. Beatrix cannot be an honest woman and a good man's wife. She "tries and she *cannot*." Proud, beautiful, and sullied, she was born what she becomes, a king's

mistress. I know not whether you have seen the notice in the "Leader;" I read it just after concluding the book. Can I be wrong in deeming it a notice tame, cold, and insufficient? With all its professed friendliness it produced on me a most disheartening impression. Surely another sort of justice than this will be rendered to "Esmond" from other quarters. One acute remark of the critic is to the effect that Blanche Amory and Beatrix are identical—sketched from the same original! To me they are about as identical as a weazel and a royal tigress of Bengal; both the latter are quadrupeds, both the former women. But I must not take up either your time or my own with further remarks.

'Believe me yours sincerely,

'C. Brontë.'

On a Saturday, a little later in this month, Miss Brontë completed 'Villette,' and sent it off to her publishers. 'I said my prayers when I had done it. Whether it is well or ill done I don't know; D.V. I will now try and wait the issue quietly. The book, I think, will not be considered pretentious; nor is it of a character to excite hostility.'

As her labour was ended she felt at liberty to allow herself a little change. There were several friends anxious to see her and welcome her to their homes—Miss Martineau, Mrs. Smith, and her own faithful Ellen. With the last, in the same letter as that in which she announced the completion of 'Villette,' she offered to spend a week.[1] She began, also, to consider whether it might not be well to avail herself of Mrs. Smith's kind invitation, with a view to the convenience of being on the spot to correct the proofs.

[1] The week was spent with Ellen Nussey. There is a letter dated Brookroyd, November 25, 1852, addressed to Mrs. Smith:—

'Your kind note reached me just when I was on the point of leaving home. I have promised to stay with my friends here for a week, and afterwards I have further promised to spend a week with Miss Martineau at Ambleside; a fortnight is as long a time as, for the present, I should like to be absent from my father.

The following letter is given not merely on account of her own criticisms on 'Villette,' but because it shows how she had learned to magnify the meaning of trifles, as all do who live a self-contained and solitary life. Mr. Smith had been unable to write by the same post as that which brought the money for 'Villette,' and she consequently received it without a line. The friend with whom she was staying says that she immediately fancied there was some disappointment about 'Villette,' or that some word or act of hers had given offence; and had not the Sunday intervened, and so allowed time for Mr. Smith's letter to make its appearance, she would certainly have crossed it on her way to London.

'December 6, 1852.

'My dear Sir,—The receipts have reached me safely. I received the first on Saturday, enclosed in a cover without a line, and had made up my mind to take the train on Monday, and go up to London to see what was the matter, and what had struck my publisher mute. On Sunday morning your letter came, and you have thus been spared the visitation of the unannounced and unsummoned apparition of Currer Bell in Cornhill. Inexplicable delays should be avoided when possible, for they are apt to urge those

'You must then permit me to defer my visit to you. I own I do not at all wish to be in a hurry about it: it pleases me to have it in prospect; it is something to look forward to and to anticipate; I keep it on the principle of the schoolboy who hoards his choicest piece of cake.

'When I mentioned your invitation to my father he suggested another reason for delay; he said I ought to wait and see what the critics would do to me; and indeed I think myself that in case of the great *Times*, for instance, having another Field-Marshal Haynau castigation in store for me I would rather undergo that infliction at Haworth than in London.

'I was glad to hear of your long stay at Woodford during the summer, for I felt sure you would enjoy it much. I trust that ere this you have heard good news from Alick. Mr. Smith mentioned last August that he was gone out to India; no doubt you will have heard before now of his safe arrival, and whether he is likely to settle comfortably in his new and distant quarters.'

subjected to their harassment to sudden and impulsive steps.

'I must pronounce you right again, in your complaint of the transfer of interest in the third volume from one set of characters to another. It is not pleasant, and it will probably be found as unwelcome to the reader as it was, in a sense, compulsory upon the writer. The spirit of romance would have indicated another course, far more flowery and inviting; it would have fashioned a paramount hero, kept faithfully with him, and made him supremely worshipful; he should have an idol, and not a mute, unresponding idol either; but this would have been unlike real life—inconsistent with truth—at variance with probability. I greatly apprehend, however, that the weakest character in the book is the one I aimed at making the most beautiful; and, if this be the case, the fault lies in its wanting the germ of the *real*—in its being purely imaginary. I felt that this character lacked substance; I fear that the reader will feel the same. Union with it resembles too much the fate of Ixion, who was mated with a cloud. The childhood of Paulina is, however, I think, pretty well imagined, but her . . . ' (the remainder of this interesting sentence is torn off the letter). 'A brief visit to London becomes thus more practicable, and if your mother will kindly write, when she has time, and name a day after Christmas which will suit her, I shall have pleasure, papa's health permitting, in availing myself of her invitation. I wish I could come in time to correct some at least of the proofs; it would save trouble.' [1]

[1] There is a letter to Mrs. Smith dated December 30, 1852:—

'I can now name Wednesday, the 5th of January, as the day when I hope to see you if all be well. Should there be any objection to this day, you will kindly let me know. My father is thus far passing the winter so well that I can look forward to leaving home for a little while with a comparatively easy mind; he seems also pleased that I should have a little change. I should leave Leeds at twenty-five minutes past ten in the morning, and, if I understand *Bradshaw* rightly, should arrive in Euston Square at fifteen minutes past four in the afternoon.

'It grieved me to see that the *Times* has shown its teeth at *Esmond* with a courteously malignant grin which seems to say that it never forgets a grudge.

'I want to know what Mr. Smith thinks about *Villette* coming out so nearly at the same time with Mrs. Gaskell's new work *Ruth*. I am afraid he will not regard the coincidence as auspicious; but I hope soon to be able to hear his verbal opinion.

'Trusting that all in "Gloucester Terrace" have spent a merry Christmas, and wishing to each and every one, by anticipation, a happy new year.'

. . . . . .

CHAPTER XXVI

The difficulty that presented itself most strongly to me, when I first had the honour of being requested to write this biography, was how I could show what a noble, true, and tender woman Charlotte Brontë really was, without mingling up with her life too much of the personal history of her nearest and most intimate friends. After much consideration of this point I came to the resolution of writing truly, if I wrote at all; of withholding nothing, though some things, from their very nature, could not be spoken of so fully as others.

One of the deepest interests of her life centres naturally round her marriage and the preceding circumstances; but more than all other events (because of more recent date, and concerning another as intimately as herself) it requires delicate handling on my part, lest I intrude too roughly on what is most sacred to memory. Yet I have two reasons, which seem to me good and valid ones, for giving some particulars of the course of events which led to her few months of wedded life—that short spell of exceeding happiness. The first is my desire to call attention to the fact that Mr. Nicholls was one who had seen her almost daily for years; seen her as a daughter, a sister, a mistress, and a friend. He was not a man to be attracted by any kind of literary fame. I imagine that this, by itself, would rather repel him when he saw it in the possession of a woman. He was a grave, reserved, conscientious man, with a deep sense of religion, and of his duties as one of its ministers.

In silence he had watched her, and loved her long. The love of such a man—a daily spectator of her manner of life

for years—is a great testimony to her character as a woman.

How deep his affection was I scarcely dare to tell, even if I could in words. She did not know—she had hardly begun to suspect—that she was the object of any peculiar regard on his part, when, in this very December, he came one evening to tea. After tea she returned from the study to her own sitting-room, as was her custom, leaving her father and his curate together. Presently she heard the study door open, and expected to hear the succeeding clash of the front door. Instead came a tap; and, 'like lightning, it flashed upon me what was coming. He entered. He stood before me. What his words were you can imagine; his manner you can hardly realise, nor can I forget it. He made me, for the first time, feel what it costs a man to declare affection when he doubts response. . . . The spectacle of one, ordinarily so statuelike, thus trembling, stirred, and overcome, gave me a strange shock. I could only entreat him to leave me then, and promise a reply on the morrow. I asked if he had spoken to papa. He said he dared not. I think I half led, half put him out of the room.'

So deep, so fervent, and so enduring was the affection Miss Brontë had inspired in the heart of this good man! It is an honour to her; and, as such, I have thought it my duty to say thus much, and quote thus fully from her letter about it. And now I pass to my second reason for dwelling on a subject which may possibly be considered by some, at first sight, of too private a nature for publication. When Mr. Nicholls had left her, Charlotte went immediately to her father and told him all. He always disapproved of marriages, and constantly talked against them. But he more than disapproved at this time; he could not bear the idea of this attachment of Mr. Nicholls to his daughter. Fearing the consequences of agitation to one so recently an invalid, she made haste to give her father a promise that, on the morrow, Mr. Nicholls should have a distinct refusal. Thus quietly and modestly did she, on whom such hard

judgments had been passed by ignorant reviewers, receive this vehement, passionate declaration of love—thus thoughtfully for her father, and unselfishly for herself, put aside all consideration of how she should reply, excepting as he wished!

The immediate result of Mr. Nicholls's [1] declaration of attachment was, that he sent in his resignation of the curacy of Haworth; and that Miss Brontë held herself simply passive, as far as words and actions went, while she suffered acute pain from the strong expressions which her father used in speaking of Mr. Nicholls, and from the too evident distress and failure of health on the part of the latter. Under these circumstances she, more gladly than ever, availed herself of Mrs. Smith's proposal that she should again visit them in London; and thither she accordingly went in the first week of the year 1853.

From thence I received the following letter. It is with a sad, proud pleasure I copy her words of friendship now:—

'London: January 12, 1853.

'It is with *you* the ball rests. I have not heard from you since I wrote last; but I thought I knew the reason of your silence, viz. application to work—and therefore I accept it, not merely with resignation, but with satisfaction.

'I am now in London, as the date above will show; staying very quietly at my publisher's, and correcting proofs, &c. Before receiving yours I had felt, and expressed to Mr. Smith, reluctance to come in the way of "Ruth;" not that I think *she* would suffer from contact with "Villette"—we

[1] Mr. Arthur Bell Nicholls was born in co. Antrim in 1817. He was of Scots parentage on both sides. He was educated by an uncle, the Rev. Alan Bell, at the Royal School at Banagher, King's Co., and at Trinity College, Dublin. He succeeded Mr. P. A. Smith as curate at Haworth. After his unsuccessful proposal to Charlotte Brontë he took for a short time a curacy at Kirk-Smeaton, and he was succeeded at Haworth by a Mr. de Renzi. Mr. Brontë's objection to Mr. Nicholls as a son-in-law was solely based upon his inadequate prospects. His stipend was necessarily very small.

know not but that the damage might be the other way—but I have ever held comparisons to be odious, and would fain that neither I nor my friends should be made subjects for the same. Mr. Smith proposes, accordingly, to defer the publication of my book till the 24th inst.; he says that will give "Ruth" the start in the papers, daily and weekly, and also will leave free to her all the February magazines. Should this delay appear to you insufficient, speak! and it shall be protracted.

'I dare say, arrange as we may, we shall not be able wholly to prevent comparisons; it is the nature of some critics to be invidious; but we need not care: we can set them at defiance; they *shall* not make us foes, they *shall* not mingle with our mutual feelings one taint of jealousy: there is my hand on that; I know you will give clasp for clasp.

'"Villette" has indeed no right to push itself before "Ruth." There is a goodness, a philanthropic purpose, a social use in the latter, to which the former cannot for an instant pretend; nor can it claim precedence on the ground of surpassing power: I think it much quieter than "Jane Eyre."

. . . . . .

'I wish to see *you*, probably at least as much as you can wish to see *me*, and therefore shall consider your invitation for March as an engagement; about the close of that month, then, I hope to pay you a brief visit. With kindest remembrances to Mr. Gaskell and all your precious circle I am,' &c.

This visit at Mrs. Smith's was passed more quietly than any previous one, and was consequently more in accordance with Miss Brontë's tastes. She saw things rather than persons; and being allowed to have her own choice of sights, she selected the '*real* in preference to the *decorative* side of life.' She went over two prisons—one ancient, the other modern—Newgate and Pentonville; over two hospitals.

the Foundling and Bethlehem. She was also taken, at her own request, to see several of the great City sights—the Bank, the Exchange, Rothschild's, &c.

The power of vast yet minute organisation always called out her respect and admiration. She appreciated it more fully than most women are able to do. All that she saw during this last visit to London impressed her deeply—so much so as to render her incapable of the immediate expression of her feelings, or of reasoning upon her impressions while they were so vivid. If she had lived, her deep heart would sooner or later have spoken out on these things.

What she saw dwelt in her thoughts, and lay heavy on her spirits. She received the utmost kindness from her hosts, and had the old warm and grateful regard for them. But looking back, with the knowledge of what was then the future, which Time has given, one cannot but imagine that there was a toning-down in preparation for the final farewell to these kind friends, whom she saw for the last time on a Wednesday morning in February. She met her friend Ellen at Keighley on her return, and the two proceeded to Haworth together.

TO MARTHA BROWN.

'Gloucester Terrace, London:
'January 28, 1853.

'Dear Martha,—If all be well I hope to come home next Wednesday. I have asked Miss Nussey to come with me. We shall reach Haworth about half-past four o'clock in the afternoon, and I know I can trust you to have things comfortable and in readiness. The table-cloths had better be put on the dining-room tables; you will have something prepared that will do for supper—perhaps a nice piece of cold boiled ham would be as well as anything, as it would come in for breakfast in the morning. The weather has been very changeable here, in London. I have often wondered how you and papa stood it at home; I felt the changes in some degree, but not half so much as I should have done at

Haworth, and have only had one really bad day of headache and sickness since I came. I hope you and Tabby have agreed pretty well, and that you have got help in your work whenever you have wanted it. Remember me kindly to Tabby, and believe me, dear Martha, your sincere friend,

'C. BRONTË.'

'Villette'—which, if less interesting as a mere story than 'Jane Eyre,' displays yet more of the extraordinary genius of the author—was received with one burst of acclamation. Out of so small a circle of characters, dwelling in so dull and monotonous an area as a 'pension,' this wonderful tale was evolved!

See how she receives the good tidings of her success![1]

[1] There are two letters, both dated February 7 and addressed to Mr. George Smith, one from Miss Brontë and the other from her father:—

'Haworth.

'My dear Sir,—I have received and read the Reviews. I think I ought to be, and feel that I *am*, very thankful. That in the *Examiner* is better than I expected, and that in the *Literary Gazette* is as good as any author can look for. Somebody also sent me the *Nonconformist* with a favourable review. The notice in the *Daily News* was undoubtedly written by Miss Martineau (to this paper she contributed her Irish letters). I have received a letter from her precisely to the same effect, marking the same point, and urging the same objections, similarly suggesting, too, a likeness to Balzac, whose works I have not read. Her letter only differs from the reviews in being severe to the point of injustice; her eulogy is also more highly wrought. On the whole, if Cornhill is content thus far, so am I.

'Yours sincerely,

'C. BRONTË.'

'Haworth, near Keighley.

'My dear Sir,—I know not whether you are in the habit of canvassing for your publication the suffrages of the provincial press. There is, however, one provincial editor to whom it might be advisable to send a copy of my daughter's work, *Villette*, viz. Mr. Baines, editor of the *Leeds Mercury*. His paper enjoys a wide circulation and consider-

'February 15, 1853.

'I got a budget of no less than seven papers yesterday and to-day. The import of all the notices is such as to make my heart swell with thankfulness to Him who takes note both of suffering, and work, and motives. Papa is pleased too. As to friends in general, I believe I can love them still, without expecting them to take any large share in this sort of gratification. The longer I live the more plainly I see that gentle must be the strain on fragile human nature; it will not bear much.'[1]

I suspect that the touch of slight disappointment, perceptible in the last few lines, arose from her great susceptibility to an opinion she valued much—that of Miss Martineau,

able influence in the north of England, and, as I am an old subscriber, and occasional contributor, to the *Mercury*, a fair notice, I think, of *Villette* might be counted upon. Offer my kind regards to Mrs. Smith, and also my acknowledgments for her late friendly hospitality to my daughter.

'I am

'Yours faithfully,

'P. Brontë.'

[1] On February 16 she writes to Mr. Smith—

'Haworth.

I do not, of course, expect to have a letter from you at present, because I know that this is the busy time at Cornhill; but after the weary mail is gone out I should like much to hear what you think of the general tone of the notices, whether you regard them as reasonably satisfactory. My father seems pleased with them, and so am I, as an evidence that the book is pretty well received. I must not tell you what I think of such reviews as that in the *Athenæum*, lest you should pronounce me fastidious and exacting. On the whole the critique I like best yet is one I got at an early stage of the work, before it had undergone the "Old Bailey," being the observations of a respected amateur critic, one A. Fraser, Esq. I am bound to admit, however, that this gentleman confined his approving remarks to the two first volumes, tacitly condemning the third by the severity of a prolonged silence.'

who, both in an article on 'Villette' in the 'Daily News' and in a private letter to Miss Brontë, wounded her to the quick by expressions of censure which she believed to be unjust and unfounded, but which, if correct and true, went deeper than any merely artistic fault. An author may bring himself to believe that he can bear blame with equanimity, from whatever quarter it comes; but its force is derived altogether from the character of this. To the public one reviewer may be the same impersonal being as another; but an author has frequently a far deeper significance to attach to opinions. They are the verdicts of those whom he respects and admires, or the mere words of those for whose judgment he cares not a jot. It is this knowledge of the individual worth of the reviewer's opinion which makes the censures of some sink so deep, and prey so heavily upon an author's heart. And thus, in proportion to her true, firm regard for Miss Martineau did Miss Brontë suffer under what she considered her misjudgment not merely of writing, but of character.

She had long before asked Miss Martineau to tell her whether she considered that any want of womanly delicacy or propriety was betrayed in 'Jane Eyre.' And on receiving Miss Martineau's assurance that she did not, Miss Brontë entreated her to declare it frankly if she thought there was any failure of this description in any future work of 'Currer Bell's.' The promise then given of faithful truth-speaking Miss Martineau fulfilled when 'Villette' appeared. Miss Brontë writhed under what she felt to be injustice.[1]

[1] It is but due to Miss Martineau to give some of the particulars of this misunderstanding, as she has written them down for me. It appears that on Miss Brontë's first interview with Miss Martineau in December 1849, she had expressed pleasure at being able to consult a friend about certain strictures of the reviewers, which she did not understand, and by which she had every desire to profit. 'She said that the reviews sometimes puzzled her, and that some imputed to her what made her think she must be very unlike other people, or cause herself to be misunderstood. She could not make it out at all, and wished that I could explain it. I had not seen that sort of criticism then, I think, but

When 'Villette' was on the point of publication she wrote thus to Miss Martineau :—

'January 21, 1853.

'I know that you will give me your thoughts upon my book, as frankly as if you spoke to some near relative whose good you preferred to her gratification. I wince under the pain of condemnation, like any other weak structure of flesh and blood; but I love, I honour, I kneel to truth. Let her smite me on the one cheek—good! the tears may spring to the eyes; but courage! there is the other side; hit again right sharply.'

'This,' as Miss Martineau observes, 'was the genuine spirit of the woman.'

Miss Martineau, in reply to this adjuration, wrote a letter part of which ran as follows :—

'As for the other side of the question, which you so desire to know, I have but one thing to say; but it is not a small one. I do not like the love, either the kind or the degree of it; and its prevalence in the book, and effect on the action of it, help to explain the passages in the reviews which you consulted me about, and seem to afford *some* foundation for the criticisms they offered.'

Miss Martineau has also allowed me to make use of the passage referring to the same fault, real or supposed, in her notice of 'Villette' in the 'Daily News.'

'All the female characters, in all their thoughts and lives, are full of one thing, or are regarded by the reader in the light of that one thought—love. It begins with the child of

I had heard *Jane Eyre* called "coarse." I told her that love was treated with unusual breadth, and that the kind of intercourse was uncommon, and uncommonly described, but that I did *not* consider the book a coarse one, though I could not answer for it that there were no traits which, on a second leisurely reading, I might not dislike on that ground. She begged me to give it that second reading, and I did on condition that she would regard my criticisms as made through the eyes of her reviewers' (*Note by Mrs. Gaskell*).

six years old, at the opening—a charming picture—and it closes with it at the last page; and so dominant is this idea—so incessant is the writer's tendency to describe the need of being loved—that the heroine, who tells her own story, leaves the reader at last under the uncomfortable impression of her having either entertained a double love, or allowed one to supersede another without notification of the transition. It is not thus in real life. There are substantial, heartfelt interests for women of all ages, and, under ordinary circumstances, quite apart from love: there is an absence of introspection, an unconsciousness, a repose in women's lives—unless under peculiarly unfortunate circumstances—of which we find no admission in this book; and to the absence of it may be attributed some of the criticism which the book will meet with from readers who are no prudes, but whose reason and taste will reject the assumption that events and characters are to be regarded through the medium of one passion only. And here ends all demur,' &c.[1]

This seems a fitting place to state how utterly unconscious she was of what was, by some, esteemed coarse in her writings. One day, during that visit at the Briery when I first met her, the conversation turned upon the subject of

[1] It must have been about this time that Miss Brontë wrote the following letter to Miss Martineau:—

'My dear Miss Martineau,—I think I best show my sense of the tone and feeling of your last by immediate compliance with the wish you express that I should send your letter. I inclose it, and have marked with red ink the passage which struck me dumb. All the rest is fair, right, worthy of you, but I protest against this passage; and were I brought up before the bar of all the critics in England, to such a charge I should respond, "Not guilty."

'I know what *love* is as I understand it; and if man or woman should be ashamed of feeling such love, then is there nothing right, noble, faithful, truthful, unselfish in this earth, as I comprehend rectitude, nobleness, fidelity, truth, and disinterestedness.

'Yours sincerely,

'C. B.

'To differ from you gives me keen pain.'

women's writing fiction; and some one remarked on the fact that, in certain instances, authoresses had much outstepped the line which men felt to be proper in works of this kind. Miss Brontë said she wondered how far this was a natural consequence of allowing the imagination to work too constantly; Sir James and Lady Kay-Shuttleworth and I expressed our belief that such violations of propriety were altogether unconscious on the part of those to whom reference had been made. I remember her grave, earnest way of saying, 'I trust God will take from me whatever power of invention or expression I may have, before He lets me become blind to the sense of what is fitting or unfitting to be said!'

Again, she was invariably shocked and distressed when she heard of any disapproval of 'Jane Eyre' on the ground above mentioned. Some one said to her in London, 'You know you and I, Miss Brontë, have both written naughty books!' She dwelt much on this; and, as if it weighed on her mind, took an opportunity to ask Mrs. Smith, as she would have asked a mother—if she had not been motherless from earliest childhood—whether indeed there was anything so wrong in 'Jane Eyre.'

I do not deny, for myself, the existence of coarseness here and there in her works, otherwise so entirely noble. I only ask those who read them to consider her life—which has been openly laid bare before them—and to say how it could be otherwise. She saw few men; and among these few were one or two with whom she had been acquainted since early girlhood—who had shown her much friendliness and kindness—through whose family she had received many pleasures—for whose intellect she had a great respect—but who talked before her, if not to her, with as little reticence as Rochester talked to Jane Eyre. Take this in connection with her poor brother's sad life, and the outspoken people among whom she lived—remember her strong feeling of the duty of representing life as it really is, not as it ought to be—and then do her justice for all that she was, and all that

she would have been (had God spared her), rather than censure her because circumstances forced her to touch pitch, as it were, and by it her hand was for a moment defiled. It was but skin deep. Every change in her life was purifying her; it hardly could raise her. Again I cry, 'If she had but lived!'

The misunderstanding with Miss Martineau on account of 'Villette" was the cause of bitter regret to Miss Brontë. Her woman's nature had been touched, as she thought, with insulting misconception; and she had dearly loved the person who had thus unconsciously wounded her. It was but in the January just past that she had written as follows, in reply to Miss Wooler, the tenor of whose letter we may guess from this answer:—

'I read attentively all you say about Miss Martineau; the sincerity and constancy of your solicitude touch me very much; I should grieve to neglect or oppose your advice, and yet I do not feel it would be right to give Miss Martineau up entirely. There is in her nature much that is very noble; hundreds have forsaken her,[1] more, I fear, in the apprehension that their fair names may suffer, if seen in connection with hers, than from any pure convictions, such as you suggest, of harm consequent on her fatal tenets. With these fair-weather friends I cannot bear to rank; and for her sin, is it not one of those of which God and not man must judge?

'To speak the truth, my dear Miss Wooler, I believe, if you were in my place, and knew Miss Martineau as I do—if you had shared with me the proofs of her genuine kindliness, and had seen how she secretly suffers from abandonment—you would be the last to give her up; you would separate the sinner from the sin, and feel as if the right lay

[1] In reference to this passage Miss Martineau writes thus:—'There is the unaccountable delusion that I was "deserted" on account of the Atkinson Letters. . . . Facts are best; so I will only say that I am not aware of having lost any friends whatever by that book, while I have gained a new world of sympathy' (*Note by Mrs. Gaskell*).

rather in quietly adhering to her in her strait, while that adherence is unfashionable and unpopular, than in turning on her your back when the world sets the example. I believe she is one of those whom opposition and desertion make obstinate in error; while patience and tolerance touch her deeply and keenly, and incline her to ask of her own heart whether the course she has been pursuing may not possibly be a faulty course.'

Kindly and faithful words! which Miss Martineau never knew of; to be repaid in words more grand and tender when Charlotte lay deaf and cold by her dead sisters. In spite of their short sorrowful misunderstanding they were a pair of noble women and faithful friends.

I turn to a pleasanter subject. While she was in London Miss Brontë had seen Lawrence's portrait of Mr. Thackeray, and admired it extremely. Her first words, after she had stood before it some time in silence, were, 'And there came up a Lion out of Judah!' The likeness was by this time engraved, and Mr. Smith sent her a copy of it.

TO G. SMITH, ESQ.

'Haworth: February 26, 1853.

'My dear Sir,—At a late hour yesterday evening I had the honour of receiving, at Haworth Parsonage, a distinguished guest, none other than W. M. Thackeray, Esq. Mindful of the rites of hospitality, I hung him up in state this morning. He looks superb in his beautiful, tasteful gilded gibbet. For companion he has the Duke of Wellington (do you remember giving me that picture?), and for contrast and foil Richmond's portrait of an unworthy individual who, in such society, must be nameless.[1] Thackeray looks away from the latter character with a grand scorn, edifying to witness. I wonder if the giver of these gifts will ever see them on the walls where they now hang; it pleases me to

[1] All three pictures are now on the walls of Mr. Nicholls's drawing-room, in a quiet village in King's County, Ireland.

fancy that one day he may. My father stood for a quarter of an hour this morning examining the great man's picture. The conclusion of his survey was, that he thought it a puzzling head; if he had known nothing previously of the original's character, he could not have read it in his features. I wonder at this. To me the broad brow seems to express intellect. Certain lines about the nose and cheek betray the satirist and cynic; the mouth indicates a childlike simplicity —perhaps even a degree of irresoluteness, inconsistency— weakness, in short, but a weakness not unamiable. The engraving seems to me very good. A certain not quite Christian expression—"not to put too fine a point upon it"—an expression of *spite*, most vividly marked in the original, is here softened, and perhaps a little—a very little—of the power has escaped in this ameliorating process. Did it strike you thus?'[1]

Miss Brontë was in much better health during this winter of 1852–3 than she had been the year before.

'For my part,' she wrote to me in February, 'I have thus far borne the cold weather well. I have taken long walks on the crackling snow, and felt the frosty air bracing. This winter has, for me, not been like last winter. December, January, February '51–2 passed like a long stormy night, conscious of one painful dream, all solitary grief and sickness. The corresponding months in '52–3 have gone over my head quietly and not uncheerfully. Thank God for the change and the repose! How welcome it has been He only knows! My father too has borne the season well; and my book and its reception thus far have pleased and cheered him.'

[1] This letter concludes as follows:—

'I have not quite settled it yet whether thanks or remonstrance is the due meed of the prompt reply I received to my last. I had concluded that Monday, the 28th, would be the earliest day when an answer could reasonably be expected, whereas one arrived Saturday, 19th. It must have been written in the very crisis of the cruel *Mail*. Well, I won't say anything. "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." The letter was very welcome, that is certain.'

In March the quiet Parsonage had the honour of receiving a visit from the then Bishop of Ripon. He remained one night with Mr. Brontë. In the evening some of the neighbouring clergy were invited to meet him at tea and supper; and during the latter meal some of the 'curates' began merrily to upbraid Miss Brontë with 'putting them into a book;' and she, shrinking from thus having her character as authoress thrust upon her at her own table, and in the presence of a stranger, pleasantly appealed to the Bishop as to whether it was quite fair thus to drive her into a corner. His Lordship, I have been told, was agreeably impressed with the gentle, unassuming manners of his hostess, and with the perfect propriety and consistency of the arrangements in the modest household. So much for the Bishop's recollection of his visit. Now we will turn to hers.

'March 4.

'The Bishop[1] has been, and is gone. He is certainly a most charming Bishop; the most benignant gentleman that ever put on lawn sleeves; yet stately too, and quite competent to check encroachments. His visit passed capitally well; and at its close, as he was going away, he expressed himself thoroughly gratified with all he had seen. The Inspector has been also in the course of the past week; so that I have had a somewhat busy time of it. If you could have been at Haworth to share the pleasures of the company without having been inconvenienced by the little bustle of the preparation, I should have been *very* glad. But the house was a good deal put out of its way, as you may suppose; all passed, however, orderly, quietly, and well. Martha waited very nicely, and I had a person to help her in the kitchen. Papa kept up, too, fully as well as I expected, though I doubt whether he could have borne another day of it. My penalty came on in a strong headache as soon as the Bishop was gone: how thankful I was that it had patiently waited his departure! I continue stupid to-day:

[1] Dr. Longley.

of course it is the reaction consequent on several days of extra exertion and excitement. It is very well to talk of receiving a Bishop without trouble, but you *must* prepare for him.'

By this time some of the Reviews had begun to find fault with 'Villette.'[1] Miss Brontë made her old request.

[1] The review which seemed to affect Miss Brontë most of all was one in *The Christian Remembrancer* of April 1853, in which the author of *Villette* was described as 'having gained both in amiability and propriety since she first presented herself to the world—soured, coarse, and grumbling; an alien, it might seem, from society, and amenable to none of its laws.' Dr. Robertson Nicoll (*The Bookman*, November 1899) has unearthed a protest from Charlotte Brontë to the editor of *The Christian Remembrancer*, in which the author of *Villette* resents the suggestion of her critic that she is an alien from society. Writing from Haworth on July 18, 1853, Miss Brontë says:—

'To him I would say that no cause of seclusion such as he would imply has ever come near my thoughts, deeds, or life. It has not entered my experience. It has not crossed my observation.

'Providence so regulated my destiny that I was born and have been reared in the seclusion of a country parsonage. I have never been rich enough to go out into the world as a participator in its gaieties, though it early became my duty to leave home, in order partly to diminish the many calls on a limited income. That income is lightened of claims in another sense now, for of a family of six I am the only survivor.

'My father is now in his seventy-seventh year; his mind is clear as it ever was, and he is not infirm, but he suffers from partial privation and threatened loss of sight; and his general health is also delicate—he cannot be left often or long: my place consequently is at home. These are reasons which make retirement a plain duty; but were no such reasons in existence, were I bound by no such ties, it is very possible that seclusion might still appear to me, on the whole, more congenial than publicity; the brief and rare glimpses I have had of the world do not incline me to think I should seek its circles with very keen zest—nor can I consider such disinclination a just subject for reproach.

'This is the truth. The careless, rather than malevolent insinuations of reviewers have, it seems, widely spread another impression. It would be weak to complain, but I feel that it is only right to place the real in opposition to the unreal.

'Will you kindly show this note to my reviewer? Perhaps he cannot now find an antidote for the poison into which he dipped that shaft he shot at "Currer Bell," but when again tempted to take aim at other

TO W. S. WILLIAMS, ESQ.

'My dear Sir,—Were a review to appear, inspired with treble their animus, *pray* do not withhold it from me. I like to see the satisfactory notices—especially I like to carry them to my father—but I *must* see such as are *un*satisfactory and hostile; these are for my own especial edification; it is in these I best read public feeling and opinion. To shun examination into the dangerous and disagreeable seems to me cowardly. I long always to know what really *is*, and am only unnerved when kept in the dark. . . .

'As to the character of "Lucy Snowe," my intention from the first was that she should not occupy the pedestal to which 'Jane Eyre" was raised by some injudicious admirers. She is where I meant her to be, and where no charge of self-laudation can touch her.

'The note you sent this morning from Lady Harriet St. Clair [1] is precisely to the same purport as Miss Mulock's [2]

prey, let him refrain his hand a moment till he has considered consequences to the wounded, and recalled the "golden rule."'

To Miss Wooler she wrote on April 13, 1853:—

'My publishers express entire satisfaction with the reception which has been accorded to *Villette*, and indeed the majority of the reviews have been favourable enough; you will be aware, however, that there is a minority, small in number, but influential in character, which views the work with no favourable eye. Currer Bell's remarks on Romanism have drawn down on him the condign displeasure of the High Church party, which displeasure has been unequivocally expressed through their principal organs—*The Guardian*, *The English Churchman*, and *The Christian Remembrancer*. I can well understand that some of the charges launched against me by these publications will tell heavily to my prejudice in the minds of most readers—but this must be borne; and for my part I can suffer no accusation to oppress me much which is not supported by the inward evidence of conscience and reason.'

[1] This was Lady Harriet Elizabeth, daughter of the third Earl of Rosslyn, and sister of the poet. She married Count Münster, German Ambassador to the Court of St. James's, and died in 1867.

[2] Dinah Maria Mulock, Mrs. Craik (1826–1887), author of *John Halifax, Gentleman*.

request—an application for exact and authentic information respecting the fate of M. Paul Emanuel! You see how much the ladies think of this little man, whom you none of you like. I had a letter the other day announcing that a lady of some note, who had always determined that whenever she married her husband should be the counterpart of "Mr. Knightly" in Miss Austen's "Emma," had now changed her mind, and vowed that she would either find the duplicate of Professor Emanuel or remain for ever single! I have sent Lady Harriet an answer so worded as to leave the matter pretty much where it was. Since the little puzzle amuses the ladies, it would be a pity to spoil their sport by giving them the key.'[1]

[1] On March 26 she writes to Mr. George Smith from Haworth—

'The *Mail* being now fairly gone out (at least I hope so) I venture to write to you.

'I trust the negotiations to which you allude in your last will be brought to an early and successful conclusion, and that their result will really be a division and consequent alleviation of labour. That you had too much to do, too much to think about, nobody of course can know so well as yourself; therefore it might seem superfluous to dwell on the subject, and yet a looker-on could not but experience a painful prescience of ill sooner or later ensuing from such exertions if continued. That week of overwork which occurred when I was in London was a thing not to be forgotten. Besides "cultivating the humanities" be resolved to turn to account some part of your leisure in getting fresh air and exercise. When people think too much, and sit too closely, the circulation loses its balance, forsakes the extremities, and bears with too strong a current on the brain; I suppose exercise is the best means of counteracting such a state of things. Pardon me if I speak too much like a doctor. You express surprise that Miss Martineau should apply to *you* for news of *me*. The fact is, I have never written to her since a letter I received from her about eight weeks ago, just after she had read *Villette*. What is more, I do not know when I can bring myself to write again. The differences of feeling between Miss M. and myself are very strong and marked; very wide and irreconcilable. Besides, I fear language does not convey to her apprehension the same meaning as to mine. In short, she has hurt me a good deal, and at present it appears very plain to me that she and I had

When Easter, with its duties arising out of sermons to be preached by strange clergymen, who had afterwards to be entertained at the Parsonage, with Mechanics' Institute meetings, and school tea-drinkings, was over and gone, she came, at the close of April, to visit us in Manchester. We had a friend, a young lady, staying with us. Miss Brontë had expected to find us alone; and although our friend was gentle and sensible after Miss Brontë's own heart, yet her presence was enough to create a nervous tremor. I was aware that both of our guests were unusually silent; and I saw a little shiver run from time to time over Miss Brontë's frame. I could account for the modest reserve of the young lady; and the next day Miss Brontë told me how the unexpected sight of a strange face had affected her.

It was now two or three years since I had witnessed a similar effect produced on her, in anticipation of a quiet evening at Fox How; and since then she had seen many and various people in London: but the physical sensations produced by shyness were still the same; and on the following day she laboured under severe headache. I had several

better not try to be close friends; my wish, indeed, is that she should quietly forget me. Sundry notions that she considers right and grand strike me as entirely monstrous; it is of no use telling her so. I don't want to quarrel with her, but I want to be let alone. The sketch you enclose is indeed a gem; I suppose I may keep it? "Miss Eyre" is evidently trying to mesmerise "Pilot" by a stare of unique fixity, and I fear I must add, stolidity. The embodiment of "Mr. Rochester" surpasses anticipation and strikes panegyric dumb.

'With regard to that momentous point M. Paul's fate, in case any one in future should request to be enlightened thereon, he may be told that it was designed that every reader should settle the catastrophe for himself, according to the quality of his disposition, the tender or remorseless impulse of his nature: drowning and matrimony are the fearful alternatives. The merciful, like Miss Mulock, Mr. Williams, Lady Harriet St. Clair, and Mr. Alexander Fraser, will of course choose the former and milder doom—drown him to put him out of pain. The cruel-hearted will, on the contrary, pitilessly impale him on the second horn of the dilemma, marrying him without ruth or compunction to that —person—that—that—individual—"Lucy Snowe."'

opportunities of perceiving how this nervousness was ingrained in her constitution, and how acutely she suffered in striving to overcome it. One evening we had, among other guests, two sisters who sang Scottish ballads exquisitely. Miss Brontë had been sitting quiet and constrained till they began 'The Bonnie House of Airlie,' but the effect of that and 'Carlisle Yetts,' which followed, was as irresistible as the playing of the Piper of Hamelin. The beautiful clear light came into her eyes; her lips quivered with emotion; she forgot herself, rose, and crossed the room to the piano, where she asked eagerly for song after song. The sisters begged her to come and see them the next morning, when they would sing as long as ever she liked; and she promised gladly and thankfully. But on reaching the house her courage failed. We walked some time up and down the street; she upbraiding herself all the while for folly, and trying to dwell on the sweet echoes in her memory rather than on the thought of a third sister who would have to be faced if we went in. But it was of no use; and dreading lest this struggle with herself might bring on one of her trying headaches, I entered at last and made the best apology I could for her non-appearance. Much of this nervous dread of encountering strangers I ascribed to the idea of her personal ugliness, which had been strongly impressed upon her imagination early in life, and which she exaggerated to herself in a remarkable manner. 'I notice,' said she, 'that after a stranger has once looked at my face he is careful not to let his eyes wander to that part of the room again!' A more untrue idea never entered into any one's head. Two gentlemen who saw her during this visit, without knowing at the time who she was, were singularly attracted by her appearance; and this feeling of attraction towards a pleasant countenance, sweet voice, and gentle timid manners was so strong in one as to conquer a dislike he had previously entertained to her works.

There was another circumstance that came to my knowledge at this period which told secrets about the finely

strung frame. One night I was on the point of relating some dismal ghost story, just before bedtime. She shrank from hearing it, and confessed that she was superstitious, and prone at all times to the involuntary recurrence of any thoughts of ominous gloom which might have been suggested to her. She said that on first coming to us she had found a letter on her dressing-table from a friend in Yorkshire, containing a story which had impressed her vividly ever since—that it mingled with her dreams at night and made her sleep restless and unrefreshing.

One day we asked two gentlemen to meet her at dinner, expecting that she and they would have a mutual pleasure in making each other's acquaintance. To our disappointment she drew back with timid reserve from all their advances, replying to their questions and remarks in the briefest manner possible, till at last they gave up their efforts to draw her into conversation in despair, and talked to each other and my husband on subjects of recent local interest. Among these Thackeray's Lectures (which had lately been delivered in Manchester) were spoken of, and that on Fielding especially dwelt upon. One gentleman objected to it strongly as calculated to do moral harm, and regretted that a man having so great an influence over the tone of thought of the day as Thackeray should not more carefully weigh his words. The other took the opposite view. He said that Thackeray described men from the inside, as it were; through his strong power of dramatic sympathy he identified himself with certain characters, felt their temptations, entered into their pleasures, &c. This roused Miss Brontë, who threw herself warmly into the discussion; the ice of her reserve was broken, and from that time she showed her interest in all that was said, and contributed her share to any conversation that was going on in the course of the evening.

What she said, and which part she took in the dispute about Thackeray's lecture, may be gathered from the following letter, referring to the same subject:—

R R

'The Lectures arrived safely; I have read them through twice. They must be studied to be appreciated. I thought well of them when I heard them delivered, but now I see their real power, and it is great. The lecture on Swift was new to me; I thought it almost matchless. Not that by any means I always agree with Mr. Thackeray's opinions, but his force, his penetration, his pithy simplicity, his eloquence—his manly, sonorous eloquence—command entire admiration. . . . Against his errors I protest, were it treason to do so. I was present at the Fielding lecture: the hour spent in listening to it was a painful hour. That Thackeray was wrong in his way of treating Fielding's character and vices my conscience told me. After reading that lecture I trebly felt that he was wrong—dangerously wrong. Had Thackeray owned a son, grown or growing up, and a son brilliant but reckless—would he have spoken in that light way of courses that lead to disgrace and the grave? He speaks of it all as if he theorised; as if he had never been called on, in the course of his life, to witness the actual consequences of such failings; as if he had never stood by and seen the issue, the final result of it all. I believe, if only once the prospect of a promising life blasted at the outset by wild ways had passed close under his eyes, he never *could* have spoken with such levity of what led to its piteous destruction. Had I a brother yet living, I should tremble to let him read Thackeray's lecture on Fielding. I should hide it away from him. If, in spite of precaution, it should fall into his hands, I should earnestly pray him not to be misled by the voice of the charmer, let him charm never so wisely. Not that for a moment I would have had Thackeray to *abuse* Fielding, or even pharisaically to condemn his life; but I do most deeply grieve that it never entered into his heart sadly and nearly to feel the peril of such a career, that he might have dedicated some of his great strength to a potent warning against its adoption by any young man. I believe temptation often assails the finest manly natures, as the pecking sparrow or destructive wasp attacks the sweetest

and mellowest fruit, eschewing what is sour and crude. The true lover of his race ought to devote his vigour to guard and protect; he should sweep away every lure with a kind of rage at its treachery. You will think this far too serious, I dare say; but the subject is serious, and one cannot help feeling upon it earnestly.'

CHAPTER XXVII

After her visit to Manchester she had to return to a re-opening of the painful circumstances of the previous winter, as the time drew near for Mr. Nicholls's departure from Haworth. A testimonial of respect from the parishioners[1] was presented, at a public meeting, to one who had faithfully served them for eight years: and he left the place, and she saw no chance of hearing a word about him in the future, unless it was some second-hand scrap of intelligence, dropped out accidentally by one of the neighbouring clergymen.

Early in June I received the following letter from Miss Brontë:—

'Haworth: June 1, 1853.

'June is come, and now I want to know if you can come on Thursday, the 9th inst.

'Ever since I was at Manchester I have been anticipating your visit. Not that I attempt to justify myself in asking you; the place has no attractions, as I told you, here in this house. Papa too takes great interest in the matter. I only pray that the weather may be fine, and that a cold, by which I am now stupefied, may be gone before the 9th, so that I may have no let and hindrance in taking you on to the moors—the sole, but, with one who loves nature as you do, not despicable, resource.

'When you take leave of the domestic circle and turn your back on Plymouth Grove to come to Haworth,

[1] A gold watch, which is still in the possession of Mr. Nicholls. The following inscription is engraved upon it: 'Presented to the Rev. A. B. Nicholls, B.A., by the teachers, scholars, and congregation of St. Michael's, Haworth, Yorkshire, May 25, 1853.'

you must do it in the spirit which might sustain you in case you were setting out on a brief trip to the backwoods of America. Leaving behind your husband, children, and civilisation, you must come out to barbarism, loneliness, and liberty. The change will perhaps do good, if not too prolonged. . . . Please, when you write, to mention by what train you will come, and at what hour you will arrive at Keighley; for I must take measures to have a conveyance waiting for you at the station; otherwise, as there is no cab-stand, you might be inconvenienced and hindered.'

In consequence of this invitation I promised to pay her a visit on my return from London, but, after the day was fixed, a letter came from Mr. Brontë, saying that she was suffering from so severe an attack of influenza, accompanied with such excruciating pain in the head, that he must request me to defer my visit until she was better. While sorry for the cause I did not regret that my going was delayed till the season when the moors would be all glorious with the purple bloom of the heather, and thus present a scene about which she had often spoken to me. So we agreed that I should not come to her before August or September. Meanwhile I received a letter from which I am tempted to take an extract, as it shows both her conception of what fictitious writing ought to be and her always kindly interest in what I was doing.[1]

[1] There is a letter to Mr. George Smith dated Haworth, July 3:—

'Thank you for your kind inquiries about my father; there is no change for the worse in his sight since I wrote last; rather, I think, a tendency to improvement. He says the sort of veil between him and the light appears thinner; his general health has, however, been lately a good deal affected, and, desirable as it might appear in some points of view to adopt your suggestions with reference to seeking the best medical advice, I fear that at present there would be a serious hazard in undertaking a long journey by rail. He must become stronger than he appears to be just now, less liable to sudden sickness and swimming in the head, before such a step could be thought of.

'Your kind offer of attention in case he should ever come to town merits and has my best acknowledgments. I know, however, that my

'July 9, 1853.

'Thank you for your letter; it was as pleasant as a quiet chat, as welcome as spring showers, as reviving as a friend's

father's first and last thought would be to give trouble nowhere, and especially to infringe on no precious time. He would, of course, take private lodgings.

'As for me, I am and have been for some weeks pretty much as usual again. That is to say, no object for solicitude whatever.

'You do not mention whether your mother and sisters are well, but I hope they are, and beg always to be kindly remembered to them. I hope too your partner, Mr. King, will soon acquire a working faculty, and leave you some leisure and opportunity effectually to cultivate health.'

There is a further letter to Mr. Smith dated Haworth, July 14:—

'Mr. Ruskin's beautiful book reached me safely this morning; its arrival was a pleasant surprise, as I was far from expecting to see it so soon after publication. Of course I have not yet read it, but a mere glance over the pages suffices to excite anticipation and to give a foretaste of excellence. Acknowledgment is also due for the great pleasure I derived from reading Dr. Forbes's *Memorandum* (sent in the last Cornhill parcel). Without according with every opinion broached, or accepting as infallible every inference drawn or every conclusion arrived at, one cannot but like the book and sincerely respect the author on account of the good sense, good feeling, good nature, and good humour everywhere obvious in his *Memorandum*.

'About a fortnight since I observed in the *Examiner* an intimation that Mr. Thackeray is about to issue a new serial. Is this good news true? and if so, do you at all know the subject, and are you to publish it? I hope so.

'Mrs. Gaskell was in town a few weeks ago, and gave a most propitious account of the great man's present mood and spirits, but I am afraid, after all his fêting in America, he will find it rather a dull change to sit down again to his desk, especially when he is in some sense bound to refrain from the very subject which must still be uppermost in his thoughts.

'My father's half-formed project of visiting London this summer for a few days has been rather painfully frustrated. In June he had a sudden seizure, which, without seeming greatly to affect his general health, brought on for a time total blindness. He could not discern between day and night. I feared the optic nerve was paralysed, and that he would never see more. Vision has, however, been partially restored,

visit; in short, it was very like a page of "Cranford." . . . A thought strikes me. Do you, who have so many friends —so large a circle of acquaintance—find it easy, when you sit down to write, to isolate yourself from all those ties, and their sweet associations, so as to be your *own woman*, uninfluenced or swayed by the consciousness of how your work may affect other minds; what blame or what sympathy it may call forth? Does no luminous cloud ever come between you and the severe Truth, as you know it in your own secret and clear-seeing soul? In a word, are you never tempted to make your characters more amiable than the Life, by the inclination to assimilate your thoughts to the thoughts of those who always *feel* kindly, but sometimes fail to *see* justly? Don't answer the question; it is not intended to be answered. . . . Your account of Mrs. Stowe[1] was stimulatingly interesting. I long to see you, to get you to say it, and many other things, all over again. My father continues better. I am better too; but to-day I have a headache again, which will hardly let me write coherently. Give my dear love to Meta and Marianne, dear happy girls as they are. You cannot now transmit my message to Flossy and Julia. I prized the little wild-flower—not that I think the sender cares for me; she *does* not, and *cannot*, for she does not know me; but no matter. In my reminiscences she is a person of a certain distinction. I think hers a fine little nature, frank and of genuine promise. I often see her, as she appeared, stepping supreme from the portico towards

but it is now very imperfect. He sometimes utters a wish that he could see the camp at Cobham, but that would not be possible under present circumstances. I think him very patient with the apprehension of what, to him, would be the greatest of privations hanging over his head. I can but earnestly hope that what remains of sight may be spared him to the end.

'I trust your mother and sisters are well, and that you have ere now secured assistance and are relieved from some part of your hard work, and consequently that your health and spirits are improved.'

[1] Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896) wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1851.

the carriage, that evening we went to see "Twelfth Night." I believe in Julia's future; I like what speaks in her movements, and what is written upon her face.'

The following letter was addressed to me soon after my return from a short tour in Normandy:—

'I was glad to get your little note, glad to hear you were at home again. Not that, practically, it makes much difference to me whether you are in Normandy or Manchester: the shorter distance separates perhaps as effectually as the longer, yet there is a mental comfort in thinking that but thirty miles intervene.

'Come to Haworth as soon as you can; the heath is in bloom now: I have waited and watched for its purple signal as the forerunner of your coming. It will not be quite faded before the 16th, but after that it will soon grow sere. Be sure to mention the day and hour of your arrival at Keighley.

'My father has passed the summer, not well, yet better than I expected. His chief complaint is of weakness and depressed spirits; the prospect of your visit still affords him pleasure. I am surprised to see how he looks forward to it. My own health has been much better lately.

'I suppose that Meta is ere this returned to school again. This summer's tour will no doubt furnish a lifelong remembrance of pleasure to her and Marianne. Great would be the joy of the little ones at seeing you all home again.

'I saw in the papers the death of Mr. S., of scarlet fever, at his residence in Wales. Was it not there you left Flossy and Julia? This thought recurred to me, with some chilling fears of what might happen; but I trust that all is safe now. How is poor Mrs. S.?

'Remember me very, very kindly to Mr. Gaskell and the whole circle. Write when you have time; come at the earliest day, and believe me yours very truthfully,

'C. Brontë.'

Towards the latter end of September I went to Haworth. At the risk of repeating something which I have previously said I will copy out parts of a letter which I wrote at the time.

'It was a dull, drizzly, Indian-inky day all the way on the railroad to Keighley, which is a rising wool-manufacturing town, lying in a hollow between hills—not a pretty hollow, but more what the Yorkshire people call a "bottom," or "botham." I left Keighley in a car for Haworth, four miles off—four tough, steep, scrambling miles, the road winding between the wavelike hills that rose and fell on every side of the horizon, with a long, illimitable, sinuous look, as if they were a part of the line of the Great Serpent which the Norse legend says girdles the world. The day was lead-coloured; the road had stone factories alongside of it; grey, dull-coloured rows of stone cottages belonging to these factories; and then we came to poor, hungry-looking fields—stone fences everywhere, and trees nowhere. Haworth is a long, straggling village: one steep narrow street—so steep that the flagstones with which it is paved are placed endways, that the horses' feet may have something to cling to, and not slip down backwards, which if they did they would soon reach Keighley. But if the horses had cats' feet and claws they would do all the better. Well, we (the man, horse, car, and I) clambered up this street, and reached the church dedicated to St. Autest (who was he?);[1] then we turned off into a lane on the left, past the curate's lodging at the sexton's, past the schoolhouse, up to the Parsonage yard-

[1] Mrs. Gaskell was misinformed as to 'St. Autest.' The church at Haworth is dedicated to St. Michael. It is a perpetual curacy, and the net value is stated to be 170*l.* per annum. The name of 'Eutest' is found in a Latin inscription in the tower, but this was probably (J. Horsfall Turner's *Haworth, Past and Present*) a stonemason's spelling of Eustat, a contraction of Eustatius. On another stone is the inscription 'Pray for ye Soul of Autest—600'—probably the rough and ready translation of a seventeenth-century incumbent, ambitious for the antiquity of his church.

door. I went round the house to the front door, looking to the church;—moors everywhere beyond and above. The crowded graveyard surrounds the house and small grass enclosure for drying clothes.

'I don't know that I ever saw a spot more exquisitely clean; the most dainty place for that I ever saw. To be sure the life is like clockwork. No one comes to the house; nothing disturbs the deep repose; hardly a voice is heard; you catch the ticking of the clock in the kitchen, or the buzzing of a fly in the parlour, all over the house. Miss Brontë sits alone in her parlour, breakfasting with her father in his study at nine o'clock. She helps in the house work; for one of their servants, Tabby, is nearly ninety, and the other only a girl. Then I accompanied her in her walks on the sweeping moors; the heather bloom had been blighted by a thunderstorm a day or two before, and was all of a livid brown colour, instead of the blaze of purple glory it ought to have been. Oh! those high, wild, desolate moors, up above the whole world, and the very realms of silence! Home to dinner at two. Mr. Brontë has his dinner sent in to him. All the small table arrangements had the same dainty simplicity about them. Then we rested, and talked over the clear bright fire; it is a cold country, and the fires gave a pretty warm dancing light all over the house. The parlour has been evidently refurnished within the last few years, since Miss Brontë's success has enabled her to have a little more money to spend. Everything fits into, and is in harmony with, the idea of a country parsonage, possessed by people of very moderate means. The prevailing colour of the room is crimson, to make a warm setting for the cold grey landscape without. There is her likeness by Richmond, and an engraving from Lawrence's picture of Thackeray; and two recesses, on each side of the high, narrow, old-fashioned mantelpiece, filled with books—books given to her, books she has bought, and which tell of her individual pursuits and tastes; *not* standard books.

'She cannot see well, and does little beside knitting.

The way she weakened her eyesight was this: When she was sixteen or seventeen, she wanted much to draw; and she copied nimini-pimini copper-plate engravings out of annuals ("stippling" don't the artists call it?), every little point put in, till at the end of six months she had produced an exquisitely faithful copy of the engraving. She wanted to learn to express her ideas by drawing. After she had tried to *draw* stories, and not succeeded, she took the better mode of writing, but in so small a hand that it is almost impossible to decipher what she wrote at this time.

'But now to return to our quiet hour of rest after dinner. I soon observed that her habits of order were such that she could not go on with the conversation if a chair was out of its place; everything was arranged with delicate regularity. We talked over the old times of her childhood; of her elder sister's (Maria's) death—just like that of Helen Burns in "Jane Eyre"—of the desire (almost amounting to illness) of expressing herself in some way, writing or drawing; of her weakened eyesight, which prevented her doing anything for two years, from the age of seventeen to nineteen; of her being a governess; of her going to Brussels; whereupon I said I disliked Lucy Snowe, and we discussed M. Paul Emanuel; and I told her of ——'s admiration of "Shirley," which pleased her, for the character of Shirley was meant for her sister Emily, about whom she is never tired of talking, nor I of listening. Emily must have been a remnant of the Titans, great-granddaughter of the giants who used to inhabit the earth. One day Miss Brontë brought down a rough, common-looking oil painting, done by her brother, of herself—a little rather prim-looking girl of eighteen—and the two other sisters, girls of sixteen and fourteen, with cropped hair, and sad dreamy-looking eyes. . . . Emily had a great dog—half mastiff, half bulldog—so savage, &c. . . . This dog went to her funeral, walking side by side with her father; and then, to the day of its death, it slept at her room door, snuffing under it, and whining every morning.

'We have generally had another walk before tea, which is at six; at half-past eight prayers; and by nine all the household are in bed, except ourselves. We sit up together till ten, or past; and after I go I hear Miss Brontë come down and walk up and down the room for an hour or so.'

Copying this letter has brought the days of that pleasant visit very clear before me—very sad in their clearness. We were so happy together; we were so full of interest in each other's subjects. The day seemed only too short for what we had to say and to hear. I understood her life the better for seeing the place where it had been spent—where she had loved and suffered. Mr. Brontë was a most courteous host; and when he was with us—at breakfast in his study, or at tea in Charlotte's parlour—he had a sort of grand and stately way of describing past times, which tallied well with his striking appearance. He never seemed quite to have lost the feeling that Charlotte was a child to be guided and ruled, when she was present; and she herself submitted to this with a quiet docility that half amused, half astonished me. But when she had to leave the room then all his pride in her genius and fame came out. He eagerly listened to everything I could tell him of the high admiration I had at any time heard expressed for her works. He would ask for certain speeches over and over again, as if he desired to impress them on his memory.

I remember two or three subjects of the conversations which she and I held in the evenings, besides those alluded to in my letter.

I asked her whether she had ever taken opium, as the description given of its effects in 'Villette' was so exactly like what I had experienced—vivid and exaggerated presence of objects, of which the outlines were indistinct or lost in golden mist, &c. She replied that she had never, to her knowledge, taken a grain of it in any shape, but that she had followed the process she always adopted when she had to describe anything which had not fallen within her own

experience; she had thought intently on it for many and many a night before falling to sleep—wondering what it was like, or how it would be—till at length, sometimes after the progress of her story had been arrested at this one point for weeks, she wakened up in the morning with all clear before her, as if she had in reality gone through the experience, and then could describe it, word for word, as it had happened. I cannot account for this psychologically; I only am sure that it was so, because she said it.

She made many inquiries as to Mrs. Stowe's personal appearance; and it evidently harmonised well with some theory of hers to hear that the author of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' was small and slight. It was another of her theories that no mixtures of blood produce such fine characters, mentally and morally, as the Scottish and English.

I recollect, too, her saying how acutely she dreaded a charge of plagiarism when, after she had written 'Jane Eyre,' she read the thrilling effect of the mysterious scream at midnight in Mrs. Marsh's [1] story of the 'Deformed.' She also said that, when she read the 'Neighbours,' she thought every one would fancy that she must have taken her conception of Jane Eyre's character from that of 'Francesca,' the narrator of Miss Bremer's story. For my own part, I cannot see the slightest resemblance between the two characters, and so I told her; but she persisted in saying that Francesca was Jane Eyre married to a good-natured 'Bear' of a Swedish surgeon.

We went, not purposely, but accidentally, to see various poor people in our distant walks. From one we had borrowed an umbrella; in the house of another we had

[1] Mrs. Marsh (1799–1874), whose maiden name was Anne Caldwell, wrote many novels and some historical works. Of *Mordaunt Hall* the *Sun* of 1849 wrote that it was 'the most beautiful of many beautiful tales yet written by its author. It fascinates the attention of the reader like Scott's never to be forgotten story of *Lucy Ashton*;' and the *Spectator* wrote of *Norman's Bridge* that it 'surpasses anything that this writer—or perhaps any other writer—has done, if we except Godwin's *chef-d'œuvre*.'

taken shelter from a rough September storm. In all these cottages her quiet presence was known. At three miles from her home the chair was dusted for her, with a kindly 'Sit ye down, Miss Brontë;' and she knew what absent or ailing members of the family to inquire after. Her quiet, gentle words, few though they might be, were evidently grateful to those Yorkshire ears. Their welcome to her, though rough and curt, was sincere and hearty.

We talked about the different courses through which life ran. She said in her own composed manner, as if she had accepted the theory as a fact, that she believed some were appointed beforehand to sorrow and much disappointment; that it did not fall to the lot of all—as Scripture told us—to have their lines fall in pleasant places; that it was well for those who had rougher paths to perceive that such was God's will concerning them, and try to moderate their expectations, leaving hope to those of a different doom, and seeking patience and resignation as the virtues they were to cultivate. I took a different view: I thought that human lots were more equal than she imagined; that to some happiness and sorrow came in strong patches of light and shadow (so to speak), while in the lives of others they were pretty equally blended throughout. She smiled, and shook her head, and said she was trying to school herself against ever anticipating any pleasure; that it was better to be brave and submit faithfully; there was some good reason, which we should know in time, why sorrow and disappointment were to be the lot of some on earth. It was better to acknowledge this, and face out the truth in a religious faith.

In connection with this conversation she named a little abortive plan which I had not heard of till then; how, in the previous July, she had been tempted to join some friends (a married couple and their child) in an excursion to Scotland. They set out joyfully; she with special gladness, for Scotland was a land which had its roots deep down in her imaginative affections, and the glimpse of two days at Edinburgh was all she had yet seen of it. But, at the first

stage after Carlisle, the little yearling child was taken with a slight indisposition; the anxious parents fancied that strange diet had disagreed with it, and hurried back to their Yorkshire home as eagerly as, two or three days before, they had set their faces northward in hopes of a month's pleasant ramble.

We parted with many intentions, on both sides, of renewing very frequently the pleasure we had had in being together. We agreed that when she wanted bustle, or when I wanted quiet, we were to let each other know, and exchange visits as occasion required.

I was aware that she had a great anxiety on her mind at this time; and being acquainted with its nature, I could not but deeply admire the patient docility which she displayed in her conduct towards her father.

Soon after I left Haworth she went on a visit to Miss Wooler, who was then staying at Hornsea. The time passed quietly and happily with this friend, whose society was endeared to her by every year.

TO MISS WOOLER.

'December 12, 1853.

'I wonder how you are spending these long winter evenings. Alone, probably, like me. The thought often crosses me, as I sit by myself, how pleasant it would be if you lived within a walking distance, and I could go to you sometimes, or have you to come and spend a day and night with me. Yes; I did enjoy that week at Hornsea, and I look forward to spring as the period when you will fulfil your promise of coming to visit me. I fear you must be very solitary at Hornsea. How hard to some people of the world it would seem to live your life! how utterly impossible to live it with a serene spirit and an unsoured disposition! It seems wonderful to me, because you are not, like Mrs. R——, phlegmatic and impenetrable, but received from nature feelings of the very finest edge. Such feelings, when they are locked up, sometimes damage the mind and temper. They

don't with you. It must be partly principle, partly self-discipline, which keeps you as you are.'

Of course, as I draw nearer to the years so recently closed, it becomes impossible for me to write with the same fulness of detail as I have hitherto not felt it wrong to use. Miss Brontë passed the winter of 1853–4 in a solitary and anxious manner. But the great conqueror Time was slowly achieving his victory over strong prejudice and human resolve. By degrees Mr. Brontë became reconciled to the idea of his daughter's marriage.

There is one other letter—addressed to Mr. Dobell—which develops the intellectual side of her character, before we lose all thought of the authoress in the timid and conscientious woman about to become a wife, and in the too short, almost perfect, happiness of her nine months of wedded life.

'Haworth, near Keighley:
'February 3, 1854.

'My dear Sir,—I can hardly tell you how glad I am to have an opportunity of explaining that taciturnity to which you allude. Your letter came at a period of danger and care, when my father was very ill, and I could not leave his bedside. I answered no letters at that time, and yours was one of three or four that, when leisure returned to me, and I came to consider their purport, it seemed to me that the time was past for answering them, and I laid them finally aside. If you remember, you asked me to go to London; it was too late either to go or to decline. I was sure you had left London. One circumstance you mentioned—your wife's illness—which I have thought of many a time, and wondered whether she is better. In your present note you do not refer to her, but I trust her health has long ere now been quite restored.

'"Balder" [1] arrived safely. I looked at him, before cutting

[1] Sydney Dobell's *Balder*, published in 1853, was, writes Professor Nichol in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, 'with the general public

his leaves, with singular pleasure. Remembering well his elder brother, the potent "Roman," it was natural to give a cordial welcome to a fresh scion of the same house and race. I have read him. He impresses me thus: He teems with power; I found in him a wild wealth of life, but I thought his favourite and favoured child would bring his sire trouble —would make his heart ache. It seemed to me that his strength and beauty were not so much those of Joseph, the pillar of Jacob's age, as of the Prodigal Son, who troubled his father, though he always kept his love.

'How is it that while the first-born of genius often brings honour the second almost as often proves a source of depression and care? I could almost prophesy that your third will atone for any anxiety inflicted by this his immediate predecessor.

'There is power in that character of "Balder," and to me a certain horror. Did you mean it to embody, along with force, any of the special defects of the artistic character? It seems to me that those defects were never thrown out in stronger lines. I did not and could not think you meant to offer him as your cherished ideal of the true great poet; I regard him as a vividly coloured picture of inflated self-esteem, almost frantic aspiration; of a nature that has made a Moloch of intellect—offered up, in pagan fires, the natural affections—sacrificed the heart to the brain. Do we not all know that true greatness is simple, self oblivious, prone to unambitious, unselfish attachments? I am certain you feel this truth in your heart of hearts.

'But if the critics err now (as yet I have seen none of their lucubrations) you shall one day set them right in the second part of "Balder." You shall show them that you too know—better, perhaps, than they—that the truly great man

and the majority of critics less fortunate than *The Roman*. It is harder to read, as it was harder to write . . . but it exhibits the highest flights of the author's imagination and his finest pictures of Nature. The descriptions of Chamouni, of the Coliseum, of spring, and of the summer's day on the hill almost sustain the comparisons which they provoke.'

is too sincere in his affections to grudge a sacrifice ; too much absorbed in his work to talk loudly about it ; too intent on finding the best way to accomplish what he undertakes to think great things of himself—the instrument. And if God places seeming impediments in his way—if his duties sometimes seem to hamper his powers—he feels keenly, perhaps writhes under, the slow torture of hindrance and delay ; but if there be a true man's heart in his breast he can bear, submit, wait patiently.

'Whoever speaks to me of "Balder"—though I live too retired a life to come often in the way of comment—shall be answered according to your suggestion and my own impression. Equity demands that you should be your own interpreter. Good-bye for the present, and believe me, faithfully and gratefully,

'CHARLOTTE BRONTË.'

A letter to her Brussels schoolfellow [1] gives an idea of the external course of things during this winter.

'March 8.

'I was very glad to see your handwriting again. It is, I believe, a year since I heard from you. Again and again you have recurred to my thoughts lately, and I was beginning to have some sad presages as to the cause of your silence. Your letter happily does away with all these ; it brings, on the whole, glad tidings both of your papa, mamma, your sisters, and, last but not least, your dear respected English self.

'My dear father has borne the severe winter very well, a circumstance for which I feel the more thankful as he had many weeks of very precarious health last summer, following an attack from which he suffered in June, and which for a few hours deprived him totally of sight, though neither his mind, speech, nor even his powers of motion, were in the least affected. I can hardly tell you how thankful I was when, after that dreary and almost despairing interval of

[1] Lætitia Wheelwright.

utter darkness, some gleam of daylight became visible to him once more. I had feared that paralysis had seized the optic nerve. A sort of mist remained for a long time; and, indeed, his vision is not yet perfectly clear, but he can read, write, and walk about, and he preaches *twice* every Sunday, the curate only reading the prayers. *You* can well understand how earnestly I wish and pray that sight may be spared him to the end; he so dreads the privation of blindness. His mind is just as strong and active as ever, and politics interest him as they do *your* papa. The Czar, the war, the alliance between France and England—into all these things he throws himself heart and soul; they seem to carry him back to his comparatively young days, and to renew the excitement of the last great European struggle. Of course my father's sympathies (and mine too) are all with Justice and Europe against Tyranny and Russia.

'Circumstanced as I have been, you will comprehend that I have had neither the leisure nor the inclination to go from home much during the past year. I spent a week with Mrs. Gaskell in the spring, and a fortnight with some other friends more recently, and that includes the whole of my visiting since I saw you last. My life is, indeed, very uniform and retired—more so than is quite healthful either for mind or body: yet I find reason for often-renewed feelings of gratitude, in the sort of support which still comes and cheers me on from time to time. My health, though not unbroken, is, I sometimes fancy, rather stronger on the whole than it was three years ago: headache and dyspepsia are my worst ailments. Whether I shall come up to town this season for a few days I do not yet know; but if I do I shall hope to call in Phillimore Place.'

In April she communicated the fact of her engagement to Miss Wooler.

'Haworth: April 12.

'My dear Miss Wooler,—The truly kind interest which you have always taken in my affairs makes me feel that it

is due to you to transmit an early communication on a subject respecting which I have already consulted you more than once. I must tell you then that since I wrote last papa's mind has gradually come round to a view very different to that which he once took; and that after some correspondence, and as the result of a visit Mr. Nicholls paid here about a week ago, it was agreed that he was to resume the curacy of Haworth, as soon as papa's present assistant is provided with a situation, and in due course of time he is to be received as an inmate into this house.

'It gives me unspeakable content to see that now my father has once admitted this new view of the case he dwells on it very complacently. In all arrangements his convenience and seclusion will be scrupulously respected. Mr. Nicholls seems deeply to feel the wish to comfort and sustain his declining years. I think from Mr. Nicholls's character I may depend on this not being a mere transitory, impulsive feeling, but rather that it will be accepted steadily as a duty, and discharged tenderly as an office of affection. The destiny which Providence in His goodness and wisdom seems to offer me will not, I am aware, be generally regarded as brilliant, but I trust I see in it some germs of real happiness. I trust the demands of both feeling and duty will be in some measure reconciled by the step in contemplation. It is Mr. Nicholls's wish that the marriage should take place this summer; he urges the month of July, but that seems very soon.

When you write to me, tell me how you are. . . . I have now decidedly declined the visit to London; the ensuing three months will bring me abundance of occupation; I could not afford to throw away a month. . . . Papa has just got a letter from the good and dear Bishop, which has touched and pleased us much; it expresses so cordial an approbation of Mr. Nicholls's return to Haworth (respecting which he was consulted), and such kind gratification at the domestic arrangements which are to ensue. It seems

Walker & Boutall phot

A. B. Nicholls

From a photograph made about 1867.

London, Published by Smith Elder & Co 15 Waterloo Place

his penetration discovered the state of things when he was here in June 1853.'

She expressed herself in other letters as thankful to One who had guided her through much difficulty and much distress and perplexity of mind; and yet she felt what most thoughtful women do who marry when the first flush of careless youth is over, that there was a strange, half-sad feeling in making announcements of an engagement—for cares and fears came mingled inextricably with hopes. One great relief to her mind at this time was derived from the conviction that her father took a positive pleasure in all the thoughts about and preparations for her wedding. He was anxious that things should be expedited, and was much interested in every preliminary arrangement for the reception of Mr. Nicholls into the Parsonage as his daughter's husband. This step was rendered necessary by Mr. Brontë's great age and failing sight, which made it a paramount obligation on so dutiful a daughter as Charlotte to devote as much time and assistance as ever in attending to his wants. Mr. Nicholls, too, hoped that he might be able to add some comfort and pleasure by his ready presence on any occasion when the old clergyman might need his services.[1]

[1] The following letter to Mr. George Smith is dated April 25, 1854. Mrs. Richmond Ritchie, the daughter of Thackeray, recalls that Mr. George Smith read it to her father when she—then a very little girl—was present:—

'Thank you for your congratulations and good wishes; if these last are realised but in part, I shall be very thankful. It gave me also sincere pleasure to be assured of your own happiness, though of that I never doubted. I have faith also in its permanent character, provided Mrs. George Smith is what it pleases me to fancy her to be. You never told me any particulars about her, though I should have liked them much, but did not like to ask questions, knowing how much your mind and time would be engaged. What *I* have to say is soon told.

'The step in contemplation is no hasty one; on the gentleman's side at least it has been meditated for many years, and I hope that in at last acceding to it I am acting right; it is what I earnestly wish to do. My

At the beginning of May Miss Brontë left home to pay three visits before her marriage. The first was to us. She only remained three days, as she had to go to the neighbourhood of Leeds, there to make such purchases as were required for her marriage. Her preparations, as she said, could neither be expensive nor extensive, consisting chiefly in a modest replenishing of her wardrobe, some repapering and repainting in the Parsonage, and, above all, converting the small flagged passage room, hitherto used only for stores (which was behind her sitting-room), into a study for her husband. On this idea, and plans for his comfort, as well as her father's, her mind dwelt a good deal; and we talked them over with the same unwearying happiness which, I

future husband is a clergyman. He was for eight years my father's curate. He left because the idea of this marriage was not entertained as he wished. His departure was regarded by the parish as a calamity, for he had devoted himself to his duties with no ordinary diligence. Various circumstances have led my father to consent to his return, nor can I deny that my own feelings have been much impressed and changed by the nature and strength of the qualities brought out in the course of his long attachment. I fear I must accuse myself of having formerly done him less than justice. However he is to come back now. He has foregone many chances of preferment to return to the obscure village of Haworth. I believe I do right in marrying him. I mean to try to make him a good wife. There has been heavy anxiety, but I begin to hope all will end for the best. My expectations, however, are very subdued—very different, I dare say, to what *yours* were before you were married. Care and Fear stand so close to Hope I sometimes scarcely can see her for the shadow they cast. And yet I am thankful too, and the doubtful future must be left with Providence.

'On one feature in the marriage I can dwell with unmingled satisfaction, with a *certainty* of being right. It takes nothing from the attention I owe to my father. I am not to leave him; my future husband consents to come here; thus papa secures by the step a devoted and reliable assistant in his old age. There can, of course, be no reason for withholding the intelligence from your mother and sisters; remember me kindly to them whenever you write.

'I hardly know in what form of greeting to include your wife's name, as I have never seen her; say to her whatever may seem to you most appropriate and most expressive of goodwill.'

suppose, all women feel in such discussions, especially when money considerations call for that kind of contrivance which Charles Lamb speaks of in his 'Essay on Old China' as forming so great an addition to the pleasure of obtaining a thing at last.

'Haworth : May 22.

'Since I came home I have been very busy stitching; the little new room is got into order, and the green and white curtains are up; they exactly suit the papering, and look neat and clean enough. I had a letter a day or two since announcing that Mr. Nicholls comes to-morrow. I feel anxious about him; more anxious on one point than I dare quite express to myself. It seems he has again been suffering sharply from his rheumatic affection. I hear this not from himself, but from another quarter. He was ill while I was in Manchester and Brookroyd. He uttered no complaint to me; dropped no hint on the subject. Alas! he was hoping he had got the better of it, and I know how this contradiction of his hopes will sadden him. For unselfish reasons he did so earnestly wish this complaint might not become chronic. I fear—I fear;[1] but if he is doomed to suffer so much the more will he need care and help. Well! come what may, God help and strengthen both him and me! I look forward to to-morrow with a mixture of impatience and anxiety.'

Mr. Brontë had a slight illness, which alarmed her much. Besides, all the weight of care involved in the household preparations pressed on the bride in this case—not unpleasantly, only to the full occupation of her time. She was too busy to unpack her wedding dresses for several days after they arrived from Halifax; yet not too busy to think

[1] A passage omitted by Mrs. Gaskell runs—

'But, however, I mean to stand by him now, whether in weal or woe. This liability to rheumatic pain was one of the strong arguments used against the marriage. It did not weigh somehow. If he is doomed to suffer,' &c.

of arrangements by which Miss Wooler's journey to be present at the marriage could be facilitated.

'I write to Miss Wooler to-day. Would it not be better, dear,[1] if you and she could arrange to come to Haworth on the same day, arrive at Keighley by the same train? Then I could order the cab to meet you at the station, and bring you on with your luggage. In this hot weather walking would be quite out of the question, either for you or for her; and I know she would persist in doing it if left to herself, and arrive half killed. I thought it better to mention this arrangement to you first, and then, if you liked it, you could settle the time, &c., with Miss Wooler, and let me know. Be sure and give me timely information, that I may write to the Devonshire Arms about the cab.

'Mr. Nicholls is a kind, considerate fellow. With all his masculine faults he enters into my wishes about having the thing done quietly, in a way that makes me grateful; and if nobody interferes and spoils his arrangements he will manage it so that not a soul in Haworth shall be aware of the day. He is so thoughtful, too, about "the ladies"—that is, you and Miss Wooler. Anticipating, too, the very arrangements I was going to propose to him about providing for your departure, &c. He and Mr. Sowden[2] come to Mr. Grant's the evening before; write me a note to let me know they are there; precisely at eight in the morning they will be in the church, and there we are to meet them. Mr. and Mrs. Grant are asked to the breakfast, not to the ceremony.'

It was fixed that the marriage was to take place on June 29. Her two friends arrived at Haworth Parsonage the day before; and the long summer afternoon and evening

[1] Miss Ellen Nussey. The letter is dated June 16, 1854.

[2] The Rev. Sutcliffe Sowden, who performed the marriage ceremony for Charlotte Brontë and Mr. Nicholls, has been dead for many years now. He and his brother the Rev. George Sowden (1822–1899), canon of Wakefield Cathedral and vicar of Hebden Bridge, Yorks, were the most intimate friends of Mr. Nicholls at the time of his marriage.

were spent by Charlotte in thoughtful arrangements for the morrow, and for her father's comfort during her absence from home. When all was finished—the trunk packed, the morning's breakfast arranged, the wedding dress laid out—just at bedtime, Mr. Brontë announced his intention of stopping at home while the others went to church. What was to be done? Who was to give the bride away? There were only to be the officiating clergyman, the bride and bridegroom, the bridesmaid, and Miss Wooler present. The Prayer Book was referred to; and there it was seen that the rubric enjoins that the minister shall receive 'the woman from her father's or *friend's* hand,' and that nothing is specified as to the sex of the 'friend.' So Miss Wooler, ever kind in emergency, volunteered to give her old pupil away.

The news of the wedding had slipt abroad before the little party came out of church, and many old and humble friends were there, seeing her look 'like a snowdrop,' as they say. Her dress was white embroidered muslin, with a lace mantle, and white bonnet trimmed with green leaves, which perhaps might suggest the resemblance to the pale wintry flower.

Mr. Nicholls and she went to visit his friends and relations in Ireland; and made a tour by Killarney, Glengariff, Tarbert, Tralee, and Cork, seeing scenery of which she says, 'Some parts exceeded all I had ever imagined. . . . I must say I like my new relations. My dear husband, too, appears in a new light in his own country. More than once I have had deep pleasure in hearing his praises on all sides. Some of the old servants and followers of the family tell me I am a most fortunate person; for that I have got one of the best gentlemen in the country. . . . I trust I feel thankful to God for having enabled me to make what seems a right choice; and I pray to be enabled to repay as I ought the affectionate devotion of a truthful, honourable man.'

Henceforward the sacred doors of home are closed upon her married life. We, her loving friends, standing outside, caught occasional glimpses of brightness, and pleasant,

peaceful murmurs of sound, telling of the gladness within; and we looked at each other, and gently said, 'After a hard and long struggle—after many cares and many bitter sorrows—she is tasting happiness now!' We thought of the slight astringencies of her character, and how they would turn to full ripe sweetness in that calm sunshine of domestic peace. We remembered her trials, and were glad in the idea that God had seen fit to wipe away the tears from her eyes. Those who saw her saw an outward change in her look, telling of inward things. And we thought, and we hoped, and we prophesied, in our great love and reverence.[1]

But God's ways are not as our ways!

Hear some of the low murmurs of happiness we, who listened, heard:[2]—

'I really seem to have had scarcely a spare moment since that dim, quiet June morning when you, Ellen, and myself all walked down to Haworth Church. Not that I have been wearied or oppressed; but the fact is my time is not my own now; somebody else wants a good portion of it, and says, "We must do so and so." We *do* so and so, accordingly; and it generally seems the right thing. . . . We have had many callers from a distance, and latterly some little occupation in the way of preparing for a small village entertainment. Both Mr. Nicholls and myself wished much to make some response for the hearty welcome and general goodwill shown by the parishioners on his return; accordingly the Sunday and day scholars and teachers, the church ringers, singers, &c., to the number of five hundred, were asked to tea and supper in the schoolroom. They seemed to enjoy it much, and it was very pleasant to see their happiness. One of the villagers, in proposing my husband's

[1] Mr. Nicholls repudiates a statement that has received currency to the effect that he discouraged his wife's literary activities. He recalls that she sat with him one evening at Haworth, and as they read together the opening chapter of a new novel they chatted pleasantly over the possible development of the plot.

[2] Letter to Miss Wooler.

health, described him as a "*consistent Christian and a kind gentleman.*" I own the words touched me deeply, and I thought (as I know *you* would have thought had you been present) that to merit and win such a character was better than to earn either wealth, or fame, or power. I am disposed to echo that high but simple eulogium. . . . My dear father was not well when we returned from Ireland. I am, however, most thankful to say that he is better now. May God preserve him to us yet for some years! The wish for his continued life, together with a certain solicitude for his happiness and health, seems, I scarcely know why, even stronger in me now than before I was married. Papa has taken no duty since we returned; and each time I see Mr. Nicholls put on gown or surplice I feel comforted to think that this marriage has secured papa good aid in his old age.'

'September 19.

'Yes! I am thankful to say my husband is in improved health and spirits. It makes me content and grateful to hear him from time to time avow his happiness in the brief, plain phrase of sincerity. My own life is more occupied than it used to be: I have not so much time for thinking: I am obliged to be more practical, for my dear Arthur is a very practical as well as a very punctual and methodical man. Every morning he is in the National School by nine o'clock; he gives the children religious instruction till half-past ten. Almost every afternoon he pays visits amongst the poor parishioners. Of course he often finds a little work for his wife to do, and I hope she is not sorry to help him. I believe it is not bad for me that his bent should be so wholly towards matters of life and active usefulness, so little inclined to the literary and contemplative. As to his continued affection and kind attentions, it does not become me to say much of them; but they neither change nor diminish.'

Her friend and bridesmaid came to pay them a visit in

October. I was to have gone also, but I allowed some little obstacle to intervene, to my lasting regret.

'I say nothing about the war; but when I read of its horrors I cannot help thinking that it is one of the greatest curses that ever fell upon mankind. I trust it may not last long, for it really seems to me that no glory to be gained can compensate for the sufferings which must be endured. This may seem a little ignoble and unpatriotic; but I think that as we advance towards middle age nobleness and patriotism have a different signification to us to that which we accept while young.

'You kindly inquire after papa. He is better, and seems to gain strength as the weather gets colder; indeed, of late years his health has always been better in winter than in summer. We are all indeed pretty well; and, for my own part, it is long since I have known such comparative immunity from headache, &c., as during the last three months. My life is different from what it used to be. May God make me thankful for it! I have a good, kind, attached husband, and every day my own attachment to him grows stronger.'

Late in the autumn Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth crossed the border hills that separate Lancashire from Yorkshire, and spent two or three days with them.

About this time Mr. Nicholls was offered a living of much greater value than his curacy at Haworth,[1] and in many ways the proposal was a very advantageous one, but he felt himself bound to Haworth as long as Mr. Brontë lived. Still, this offer gave his wife great and true pleasure, as a proof of the respect in which her husband was held.

'November 29.

'I intended to have written a line yesterday, but just as I was sitting down for the purpose Arthur called to me to take a walk. We set off, not intending to go far; but, though wild and cloudy, it was fair in the morning; when we had

[1] At Padiham, near Gawthorpe, in the gift of Sir J. Kay-Shuttleworth.

got about half a mile on the moors Arthur suggested the idea of the waterfall; after the melted snow, he said, it would be fine. I had often wished to see it in its winter power; so we walked on. It was fine indeed; a perfect torrent racing over the rocks, white and beautiful! It began to rain while we were watching it, and we returned home under a streaming sky. However I enjoyed the walk inexpressibly, and would not have missed the spectacle on any account.'

She did not achieve this walk of seven or eight miles in such weather with impunity. She began to shiver soon after her return home, in spite of every precaution, and had a bad, lingering sore throat and cold, which hung about her and made her thin and weak.

'Did I tell you that our poor little Flossy is dead? She drooped for a single day, and died quietly in the night without pain. The loss even of a dog was very saddening; yet, perhaps, no dog ever had a happier life or an easier death.'

On Christmas Day she and her husband walked to the poor old woman whose calf she had been set to seek in former and less happy days, carrying with them a great spice cake to make glad her heart. On Christmas Day many a humble meal in Haworth was made more plentiful by her gifts.

Early in the new year (1855) Mr. and Mrs. Nicholls went to visit Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth at Gawthorpe. They only remained two or three days, but it so fell out that she increased her lingering cold by a long walk over damp ground in thin shoes.

Soon after her return she was attacked by new sensations of perpetual nausea and ever recurring faintness. After this state of things had lasted for some time she yielded to Mr. Nicholls's wish that a doctor should be sent for. He came, and assigned a natural cause for her miserable indisposition;

a little patience and all would go right. She, who was ever patient in illness, tried hard to bear up and bear on. But the dreadful sickness increased and increased, till the very sight of food occasioned nausea. 'A wren would have starved on what she ate during those last six weeks,' says one. Tabby's health had suddenly and utterly given way, and she died in this time of distress and anxiety respecting the last daughter of the house she had served so long. Martha tenderly waited on her mistress, and from time to time tried to cheer her with the thought of the baby that was coming. 'I dare say I shall be glad some time,' she would say; 'but I am so ill—so weary——' Then she took to her bed, too weak to sit up. From that last couch she wrote two notes in pencil. The first, which has no date, is addressed to her own 'Dear Nell.' [1]

'I must write one line out of my dreary bed. The news of Mercy's probable recovery came like a ray of joy to me. I am not going to talk of my sufferings; it would be useless and painful. I want to give you an assurance which I know will comfort you, and that is that I find in my husband the tenderest nurse, the kindest support, the best earthly comfort that ever woman had. His patience never fails, and it is tried by sad days and broken nights. Write and tell me about Mrs. ——'s case; how long was she ill, and in what way? Papa—thank God!—is better. Our poor old Tabby is *dead* and *buried*. Give my kind love to Miss Wooler. May God comfort and help you!

'C. B. Nicholls.'

The other—also in faint, faint pencil marks—was to her Brussels schoolfellow.

'February 15.

'A few lines of acknowledgment your letter *shall* have,

[1] There were actually three pencil notes, two to Miss Nussey and one to Miss Wheelwright. The late Miss Nussey's letters are in the Brontë Museum at Haworth. Miss Wheelwright's pencilled letter, and a few of the others that Miss Brontë addressed to her, are still in her possession.

whether well or ill. At present I am confined to my bed with illness, and have been so for three weeks. Up to this period, since my marriage, I have had excellent health. My husband and I live at home with my father; of course I could not leave *him*. He is pretty well, better than last summer. No kinder, better husband than mine, it seems to me, there can be in the world. I do not want now for kind companionship in health and the tenderest nursing in sickness. Deeply I sympathise in all you tell me about Dr. W. and your excellent mother's anxiety. I trust he will not risk another operation. I cannot write more now; for I am much reduced and very weak. God bless you all!—Yours affectionately, 'C. B. Nicholls.'

I do not think she ever wrote a line again.[1] Long days and longer nights went by; still the same relentless nausea and faintness, and still borne on in patient trust. About the third week in March there was a change; a low, wandering delirium came on; and in it she begged constantly for food and even for stimulants. She swallowed eagerly now; but it was too late. Wakening for an instant from this stupor of intelligence, she saw her husband's woe-worn face, and caught the sound of some murmured words of prayer that

[1] This letter to Miss Nussey would seem to have been written a little later. It is not dated, but it is printed later in the privately issued volume of letters to which reference has been made elsewhere:—

'My dear Ellen,—Thank you very much for Mrs. Hewitt's sensible, clear letter. Thank her too. In much her case was wonderfully like mine, but I am reduced to greater weakness; the skeleton emaciation is the same. I cannot talk. Even to my dear, patient, constant Arthur I can say but few words at once.

'These last two days I have been somewhat better, and have taken some beef-tea, a spoonful of wine and water, a mouthful of light pudding at different times.

'Dear Ellen, I realise full well what you have gone through and will have to go through with poor Mercy. Oh, may you continue to be supported and not sink! Sickness here has been terribly rife. Kindest regards to Mr. and Mrs. Clapham, your mother, Mercy. Write when you can.—Yours, 'C. B. Nicholls.'

God would spare her. 'Oh!' she whispered forth, 'I am not going to die, am I? He will not separate us, we have been so happy.'

Early on Saturday morning, March 31, the solemn tolling of Haworth church bell spoke forth the fact of her death to the villagers who had known her from a child, and whose hearts shivered within them as they thought of the two sitting desolate and alone in the old grey house.

CHAPTER XXVIII

I HAVE always been much struck with a passage in Mr. Forster's 'Life of Goldsmith.' [1] Speaking of the scene after his death, the writer says—

'The staircase of Brick Court is said to have been filled with mourners, the reverse of domestic; women without a home, without domesticity of any kind, with no friend but him they had come to weep for; outcasts of that great solitary wicked city, to whom he had never forgotten to be kind and charitable.'

This came into my mind when I heard of some of the circumstances attendant on Charlotte's funeral.

Few beyond that circle of hills knew that she, whom the nations praised far off, lay dead that Easter morning. Of kith and kin she had more in the grave to which she was soon to be borne than among the living. The two mourners, stunned with their great grief, desired not the sympathy of strangers.[2] One member out of most of the families in the

[1] John Forster (1812–1876) wrote his *Life of Goldsmith* in 1848.

[2] Mr. Brontë wrote to Mr. George Smith as follows:—

'Haworth, near Keighley:
'April 20, 1855.

'My dear Sir,—I thank you for your kind sympathy. Having heard my dear daughter speak so much about you and your family, your letter seemed to be one from an old friend. Her husband's sorrow and mine is indeed very great. We mourn the loss of one whose like we hope not ever to see again, and, as you justly state, we do not mourn alone. That you may never experimentally know sorrow such as ours, and that

parish was bidden to the funeral; and it became an act of self-denial in many a poor household to give up to another the privilege of paying their last homage to her; and those who were excluded from the formal train of mourners thronged the churchyard and church, to see carried forth and laid beside her own people, her whom, not many months ago, they had looked at as a pale white bride, entering on a new life with trembling happy hope.

Among those humble friends who passionately grieved over the dead was a village girl that had been betrayed some little time before, but who had found a holy sister in Charlotte. She had sheltered her with her help, her counsel, her strengthening words; had ministered to her needs in her time of trial. Bitter, bitter was the grief of this poor young woman, when she heard that her friend was sick unto death, and deep is her mourning until this day. A blind girl, living some four miles from Haworth, loved Mrs. Nicholls so dearly that, with many cries and entreaties, she implored those about her to lead her along the roads, and over the moor paths, that she might hear the last solemn words, 'Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Such were the mourners over Charlotte Brontë's grave.

I have little more to say. If my readers find that I have not said enough, I have said too much. I cannot measure or judge of such a character as hers. I cannot map out vices, and virtues, and debatable land. One who knew her long and well—the 'Mary' of this Life—writes thus of her dead friend: 'She thought much of her duty, and had

when trouble does come you may receive due aid from Heaven, is the sincere wish and ardent prayers of

'yours very respectfully and truly,
'P. Brontë.

'To
'George Smith, Esq.,
'65 Cornhill, London.'

loftier and clearer notions of it than most people, and held fast to them with more success. It was done, it seems to me, with much more difficulty than people have of stronger nerves and better fortunes. All her life was but labour and pain; and she never threw down the burden for the sake of present pleasure. I don't know what use you can make of all I have said. I have written it with the strong desire to obtain appreciation for her. Yet what does it matter? She herself appealed to the world's judgment for her use of some of the faculties she had—not the best, but still the only ones she could turn to strangers' benefit. They heartily, greedily enjoyed the fruits of her labours, and then found out she was much to be blamed for possessing such faculties. Why ask for a judgment on her from such a world?'

But I turn from the critical, unsympathetic public, inclined to judge harshly because they have only seen superficially and not thought deeply. I appeal to that larger and more solemn public who know how to look with tender humility at faults and errors, how to admire generously extraordinary genius, and how to reverence with warm, full hearts all noble virtue. To that Public I commit the memory of Charlotte Brontë.

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